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QUEEN ELIZABETH

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QUEEN ELIZABETH
AND TUDOR ENGLAND

942.055

BY

IERNE L. PLUNKET

AUTHOR OF "ISABEL OF CASTILE," "EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES," ETC.

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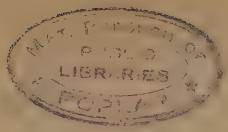

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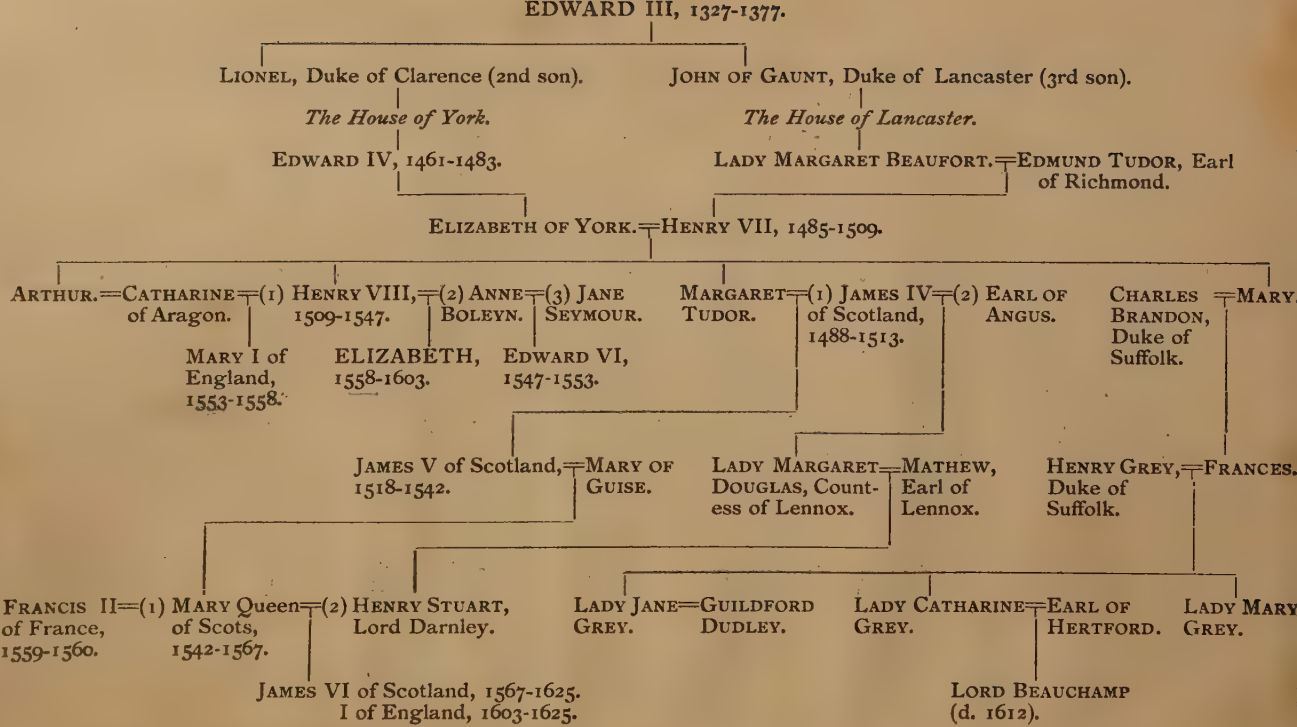
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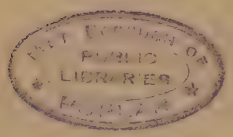

Principal Tudor Dates

Henry VII. Accession 1485.
1492. Columbus discovers America.
1497. Cabot discovers Newfoundland.

Henry VIII. Accession 1509.
1529. Reformation Parliament.
1533. Elizabeth Tudor born.
1535. Act of Supremacy.

Edward VI. Accession 1547.
1547. Battle of Pinkie.
1549. Fall of Somerset.

The Nine Days' Queen. 1553.

Mary. Accession 1553.
1554. Marriage of Philip and Mary.
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Elizabeth. Accession 1558.
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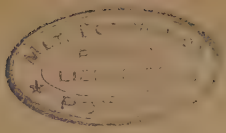


QUEEN ELIZABETH
AND TUDOR ENGLAND

Chapter I

THE FIRST TUDOR SOVEREIGN

HISTORY is a record of the growth not so much of individual characters and fortunes, as of peoples and nations; for individuals, however famous, are after all but a part of their surroundings, and we cannot understand them unless we first understand the world in which they lived. This is especially true of Queen Elizabeth, daughter of her age both in her failings and virtues, one of whose chief claims to genius as a ruler lies in her almost uncanny instinct for avoiding the snares with which the path of sixteenth-century governments was so liberally strewn.

These snares were not always the deliberate work of enemies: often they were pitfalls dug by time itself along the road of change that ever and again in history men and women are compelled to travel. The sixteenth century was such a time of change, when England grew up, ceasing

to obey blindly like a child the authorities and customs she had accepted during the Middle Ages, and so developing through the experience gained by thinking and acting for herself into the responsible nation we call " modern."

Yet in August 1485, when Henry Tudor, Duke of Richmond, heir of the House of Lancaster, defeated his Yorkist rival Richard III and left him dead on the battlefield of Bosworth, no one, least of all the victor himself, was aware of any changes pending save the establishment of a new dynasty.

Although of the blood royal through his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, Henry's own claim to the throne was weak: and when he consented to marry his cousin the Princess Elizabeth, niece of Richard III, and obvious heiress to the crown as well as of the House of York, there was general rejoicing amongst his subjects. This marriage it was felt might put a definite end to the disorder that had like a smouldering flame broken out at intervals during the last quarter of a century to scorch and wither national life. Peace instead of civil war was indeed all that Englishmen sought from their new sovereign; but keen as was their desire to obtain it, we must not imagine that the Wars of the Roses had devastated the country-side beyond recognition, leaving a " no-man's-land "

of blasted trees and ruins. They had been feuds between great barons rather than a life and death struggle of the whole nation. So small and sparsely scattered was the population of this island that whole districts probably knew no more of the actual fighting than they learned from travellers' tales at the local inns.

Even the large towns of that date, except perhaps London and Bristol, would appear to our eyes mere villages dotted here and there about a country that consisted otherwise of ploughland pastures, woods, marsh, and rough heathland. This impression would be intensified by a glimpse of the towns themselves, with their narrow ill-paved streets in which most houses were little better than insanitary hovels, fit shelter for the pigs that nosed for refuse amid the rushes on their floors.

Occasional hanging signs would indicate a shop or inn, but a century was to pass before glass (and then chiefly of the thick bull's-eye variety) was to be generally used in windows; and most tradesmen would bring their very limited stock of goods from the dimly latticed rooms where they were stored, and spread them on trestle tables out of doors for the benefit of customers, merely at certain hours or seasons.

Not trade, but agriculture had been the dominant feature of England during the Middle

Ages; and in the towns as well as villages most houses, even monasteries and parsonages, were also farms, their inmates busy from sunrise to sunset growing the wheat and barley required for the household bread and ale, or tending the sheep, the pigs, the fowls, and the plough-oxen.

At that time St. Martin's Church, now the centre of one of the busiest parts of London, really stood " in the fields," while Westminster, with its palace and parliament buildings, was a separate town, and the great highway of the Capital was not a street but the river Thames bordered by gardens and orchards.

One thing in mediaeval England that every man possessed and does not to-day was fresh air: he could step out from his squalid house in which no modern labourer would consent to spend a night, and, without expense of train or bus, stand after a short walk amid the open spaces of fresh green fields. But he would be put to both expense and trouble if he wished to pass from one town or part of the country to another; for the roads were not only " villainous, boggy, and wild," but haunted by rogues and bands of robbers on the look-out to cut likely throats or saddle-bags.

The wise traveller went armed and accompanied by armed friends, taking care that the horse on which he rode was strong of wind and

limb. Sometimes the accidents that befell him were of a kind we can hardly imagine to-day. A certain glovemaker, who was journeying towards Aylesbury at Christmastide, with the darkness settling down around him, urged on his horse to a smart trot in the hope of reaching a fireside and bed. A stranger, he had no idea that the local miller had lately sent his servants to bring him back several cartloads of a particular kind of clay he required from the main high-road. They dug, we are told, " a pit ten feet wide, eight feet broad, and eight feet deep," and into it that dark night fell the luckless glovemaker, and was drowned. A Jury tried the miller, but acquitted him without a word of blame, for it was proved that he had not intended to murder anyone, and public conscience at that time asked no more.

The streets of a mediaeval town seemed the natural place in which a householder should deposit his refuse, a butcher kill his pigs or sheep, the dyer empty his dirty water, the farmer pile his manure without any consideration for the finer feelings of fellow-townsmen who might object. As to the high roads, it was deemed a man's own fault if he came to mischance there; and scant sympathy would be wasted on the fate of a mere stranger such as a travelling glovemaker.

The English had always a reputation for disliking foreigners. Four to five hundred years

ago they often carried this prejudice to the extent of distrusting men and women from the next county, an unfriendliness caused by the way many of them had suffered during the Civil War or from baronial quarrels. It is one thing to welcome the stranger when the telephone and the police station are handy if he proves undesirable; it is quite another when a village possesses only a single ill-armed constable and the fellow from a distance may be a spy looking round for stores to pillage, or for quarters for a troop of soldiers hidden in a wood a few miles off.

The mediaeval Englishman was so busy trying to preserve himself from violence, robbery, famine, and plague, all quite usual visitations of the country-side, that he had little time or energy left to think out political problems or plan large trading schemes. Even in agriculture, at which he worked doggedly in order to gain his daily bread, he showed no enterprise; and as late as the sixteenth century crops were sown and harvested by almost the same clumsy methods as in Saxon or Norman times.

A nation must enjoy a fair measure of peace and adequate security before it can think and experiment, and these were the chief gifts brought by the first Tudor sovereign to the land he had gained by force of arms. " He was one of those best sort of wonders," says the historian

Bacon, "a wonder for wise men": and the phrase clings about the memory of Henry VII.

In spite of his victory and the popular marriage with which he began his reign, there was nothing "showy" about this grandfather of Queen Elizabeth, from whom she drew her inheritance of shrewd caution and love of peace. "He was a little above just stature, well and straight limbed, but slender. His countenance was reverend and a little like a churchman." His character was in keeping with this description. He did not love his friends or hate his enemies too violently. He was a dignified man who always kept his counsel, for he had learned from life to trust only those whose fortune he had made, and could as easily unmake.

From childhood Henry Tudor had been a witness of the evils wrought by an ambitious baronage, when the land was ruled not by kings, but by king-makers like the famous Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, who had estates and castles in twenty-two counties, and a revenue that far exceeded his royal master's. Fortunately for the new King, the leaders of the English baronage had, like the Kilkenny cats tied up in their bag to fight things out, partly destroyed themselves in the course of their civil wars. In 1509 we learn that there was only one duke and one marquis left in the whole of England; and

Henry took care that the old balance of class in favour of the baronage thus upset should not be restored. "Nobles," men said in those days, "like weeds in a fair garden must be mowed down full plain"; and the ministers to whom Henry turned for advice or entrusted the execution of his orders were not members of the old aristocracy, who thought of him as one of themselves a little more successful in his career than the rest, but officials he had selected for their business brains, or churchmen of no particular family whom he could reward with a rich bishopric without any expense to his own pocket.

Most of these statesmen became hated throughout the country for their greed and harshness. It was their policy to exact and hoard money rather than to scatter it broadcast like the successful barons of the past; and at times the King's authority alone saved them from being torn in pieces by the people. That their very lives should depend on his favour did not displease Henry VII, nor that Empson and Dudley, the most unpopular of his ministers, should be called "horse-leeches." He was not even annoyed when his spies told him, as they often did, that he himself was called a miser, for so long as he grew richer and richer he did not mind being disliked.

During the Wars of the Roses rival kings of England had been forced to squander revenues and lands in winning or rewarding powerful followers; with the result that they had no money left to pay their judges and other officials on whom the welfare and security of the nation in general depended. In despair, judges had taken bribes from the rich; and the King's servants, being no longer afraid that they might be punished in the law-courts for wrong-doing, did all they could to please the great nobles who could reward them, while they allowed the poor and weak to be grievously oppressed. "The law serveth of nought else in these days but to do wrong," declared the rebel leader, Jack Cade, in the middle of the fifteenth century. "Nothing is sped but by mede, drede, or favour." [1]

Henry VII recognized that if he wished to have good government he must be able to pay for its upkeep. His maxim was that "a king who wishes to be strong must always have money." Thus, not so much Cardinal Morton, his Chancellor, but he himself was the real author of the disgraceful measure nicknamed "Morton's Fork" because of its two prongs. A tax called "Benevolences," supposed to be a free loan, was levied on all who were believed to be rich; the

[1] "but by bribery, fear, or influence."

commissioners who collected it being instructed to tell their victims that if thrifty " they must needs have because they laid up: and if they were spenders they must needs have because it was seen in their port and manner of living."

Where mediaeval sovereigns had employed sword or axe against their enemies, Henry made use of fines as a punishment; a weapon far more crippling in the end since it struck, not at a single member of a family, but at the root of all the influence of the barons. The saying was that " the rich were hanged by the purse."

In other ways also the new King showed himself in advance of his time. His cautious and far-seeing mind was quite unmoved by either the love of fighting for its own sake, so dear to the heart of the Middle Ages, or even by the desire of many of his subjects for a war with France. Ever since in 1066 a Duke of Normandy had become King of England, his descendants had been brought up to regard campaigns across the Channel as one of their natural duties; though by the days of Henry Tudor, Calais alone remained of all their once wide Continental dominions; and Calais was in truth nothing but a " White Elephant," a fortress in a foreign land, which cost the King far more in money than it earned in glory.

Henry did not go so far as to admit this, but he

fully recognized that, as a question of practical politics, France by this time belonged to the French, and no claims of dead and gone Dukes of Normandy were ever going to make it English. He was determined therefore not to spend time or money on a lost cause, though, if his people were set on a fight with France, he was ready enough to humour them in his grim way and turn their folly to his own ends.

" He loved a noise of war," says Bacon, " to draw forth treasure ": and Henry's French campaign proved another two-pronged fork. In 1492 a fire-eating Parliament joyfully granted him large sums of money to raise an army against the national enemy, but hardly had 25,000 well-equipped men encamped before the walls of Boulogne than they received orders to raise the siege and return home. Henry had already allowed the King of France to buy from him, for a handsome sum, a treaty of peace and friendship. Thus " he made profit upon his subjects for war and upon his enemies for peace." Scarcely a gallant way of obtaining peace perhaps, but as a result of his hazardous youth Henry Tudor, who " from five years old had always been a fugitive or a prisoner " had decided that it was better to be rich than gallant; and his subjects had cause to bless his experience. Grumble they might and did at his exactions, but the larger part of the

nation, country squires, respectable peasant-farmers, and townsfolk, trusted him even if they did not love him and gave him their unwavering support.

In return, especially during the early years of his reign, he pleased them by summoning frequent parliaments to Westminster, where he made the House of Commons his accomplice and ally, both in filling his treasury and subduing their mutual enemy, the unruly baronage. His first Parliament confirmed his shaky title to the throne, declaring " the inheritance of the crown should rest, remain, and abide in King Henry VII," even before his marriage with the Yorkist heiress to whom he had no intention of seeming indebted for his throne.

His second Parliament gave him power to establish a committee of his Privy Council as a separate Court of Law, the famous " Court of Star Chamber " [1] so disliked by the nation in Stuart times. But in the days when justice was too often decided by " mede, drede, or favour," ordinary men and women were thankful to bring their suits before judges who feared no anger or influence save the King's.

Amongst the letters of the Paston family in Norfolk, written in the days of civil war, there is

[1] So called because the roof of the room where the Court usually met was decorated with stars.

the following entry: " Geoffrey asked Palmer why the rent was not asked in mine husband's time, and Palmer said for [*i.e.*, because] he was a great man, and a wise man of the law, and that was the cause men would not ask him the rent." There was no one so great or wise in their knowledge of the law amongst Henry VII's subjects that the Court of Star Chamber dared not insist that he paid his just dues. Parliament passed the " Statute of Livery and Maintenance," forbidding the barons to maintain large bodies of armed followers dressed in their livery, since this had been the cause of so much fighting and injustice in the past in country neighbourhoods ; and the new Court enforced the measure with heavy fines.

Even " the stout gentlemen of the North of England," always given to turbulence, learned to quail before its judgements, as well as Henry's more law-abiding supporters in the South. One of these, the Earl of Oxford, invited his royal master to visit him, and arranged that, when the King left, his own followers should stand in two long lines in front of his house to throw up their hats and raise a cheer.

At the sight of them, even while he acknowledged their greeting, the King snapped out, " My lord . . . these handsome gentlemen and yeomen which I see on both sides of me are sure

your menial servants?" To this the Earl replied, smiling, "It may please your Grace that were not for mine ease: they are most of them my retainers that are come to do me service at such a time as this and chiefly to see your Grace." "By my faith, my lord," interrupted the King with a start, "I thank you for my good cheer but I may not endure to have my laws broken in my sight, my attorneys must speak with you." Not long afterwards it is said the Court of Star Chamber fined the Earl of Oxford £10,000 for his rash display of loyalty.

Year by year, by such means, through taxes, forced loans, and fines, the yawning treasury slowly filled; so that Henry Tudor, in youth a homeless poverty-stricken adventurer, came by the end of his reign to be regarded as one of the richest sovereigns in Europe. Yet miser though he appeared, his biographer says "he never spared charge which his affairs required"; and we shall see later that he was willing in the interests of trade to risk his treasure on expeditions to search out the golden wonders of Cathay across unknown seas.

It is one of his claims to be remembered that he recognized the growing importance of commerce. He strove to arrange favourable terms for English merchants who traded with Flanders and with Venice, at that time the principal pur-

chasers of English wool. He also tried to secure for his subjects a share in the trade of the Baltic, which was in the hands of the Cities of the Hanseatic League. He did not succeed in all these plans, and some of them were neither wise nor possible, but his policy as a whole attained its object. " What he minded he compassed," says Bacon, and calls him " this Solomon of England," adding drily " for Solomon also was too heavy upon his people in exactions."

This judgement Henry VII would have accepted as wholly a compliment, for the rulers of those times believed that their subjects existed to make sacrifices for the state. He left his son a kingdom at peace, a full treasury, and an undisputed succession, and these he rightly held were the foundation of royal power and glory.

Chapter II

THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

TO understand the relations between England and the Continent at the beginning of the first Tudor reign, we must forget our modern geography and the British Empire as it is to-day, and imagine a map without America, Australia, or the greater part of Africa. This mere slice of the globe would be bordered on one side by the Atlantic, the " Sea of Darkness on which ships dared not venture out of sight of land," and on the other by the still more formidable " sea of pitchy blackness " the waves of which beat on Chinese shores.

Within the boundary of these two oceans lay the mediaeval world: Europe, North Africa, and Asia; the latter containing all the luxuries of life, such as pepper, spices, perfumes, and rich silks, on which Western civilization had learned to depend. Trade in the Middle Ages meant trade with the East alone; and Mediterranean cities like Genoa and Venice, whose merchant fleets loaded the coveted goods at Smyrna, Joppa, Alexandria, and other ports of the Levant and

bore them away to sell in European markets, were the great commercial powers of the age.

For a share in this Eastern commerce England was inconveniently situated away in the North Sea, and, though she carried on a fairly brisk trade in wool with her neighbour, Flanders, it was really Venetian fleets that kept her in touch with civilization, exchanging in London and Southampton their cargoes of luxuries for her exports of fleece, yarn, rough cloth, tin, and hides.

Had the world been as small as mediaeval minds imagined, and no further voyages of discovery opened up fresh markets, England might have remained to this day, except perhaps in her own eyes, a nation of no importance. One of the reasons why Tudor times are so interesting to the people of Great Britain and to their cousins overseas, is that during the five Tudor reigns, from 1485 to 1603, the whole outlook of Western Europe was changed, and a beginning made in that policy of colonization and empire-building that was to transform the world.

The inducement to organize voyages of discovery was given by an obstruction. This may seem an odd statement, but it is true. If Europe had been able to continue trading freely with the Far East, her sons and daughters would have continued also for a long time to do nothing more adventurous than go on pilgrimages to

Jerusalem by way of Bordeaux, Italy, and Constantinople, leaving behind them guide-books full of their encounters with strange cooking, flea-ridden inns, and robbers.

The pilgrim was destined, however, to receive a rude shock when in the course of the Middle Ages a fierce race, the Seljuk Turks, overran Asia Minor, Palestine, and Egypt, and established its empire like a barrier between East and West. The Turks were not only Mohammedans by creed, disliking Christians as their natural enemies, and therefore unwilling to allow them to visit their sacred shrines, but soldiers rather than traders. To Venetian and Genoese demands for leave to purchase oriental goods as of old, they either replied with a stern "no," or demanded such an enormous price in return for the concession that Mediterranean merchants almost fainted at the news. Yet, for a long while, it seemed there was no alternative: the price suggested must be paid or Europe must do without the goods she required.

A third method, that of force, was tried indeed, but met with no lasting success. Both Venetians and Genoese were brave fighters, but they were jealous of each other, and even more of the Greeks who disputed with them the control of Eastern Trade. By acting as allies they might have forced the Turks to accept

more reasonable terms, but singly, working against each other in secret, they were helpless. Even the Crusades, that for a time protected pilgrims, failed to secure more open markets. In 1453 the Turks, who had already advanced into Greece, planted the standard of the Crescent in Constantinople, once the capital of the Christian Empire; and the mediaeval dream of a united Christendom stretching the length and breadth of Europe faded away.

Irritated at the ever-rising cost of pepper and spices that by the fifteenth century they regarded as necessaries of life, other nations of Europe, besides the Mediterranean Powers, began to send out ships to look for new trade routes to the East: and in this way, after numberless voyages of exploration along the West African coast, the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and in the year 1498 arrived in India; while in 1492 the Genoese, Christopher Columbus, attempting to reach the same goal by sailing due west, landed on those islands off the American coast that to-day we call the West Indies.

The Atlantic with its rolling breakers and unknown winds had been to mediaeval minds more of an obstruction than the Turk. Anything they feared might lie beyond that ever-stretching mass of grey, from the edge of the world to sucking whirlpools or a tideless lake.

Stay-at-home historians of an imaginative turn of mind filled the blank with " Isles of the Blest," where they declared the tired Ulysses and holy St. Brendan rested from their labours beneath skies for ever summer blue.

Attracted partly perhaps by the thought of a climate so different from their own, but mostly by hopes of finding gold and spices, crews of Bristol sailors put out at different times across the " sea of darkness " only to be lost in its waves or return to port defeated.

In the reign of Henry VII, however, a Genoese sailor, Bartholomew Columbus, delayed on his voyage by pirates and storms, visited the English Court and laid before the King a scheme planned by his brother Christopher, for reaching Cathay and India by sailing to the West. All that he needed, he declared, to achieve success were money and patronage; and both, after due consideration, the cautious Tudor was prepared to promise.

It is sad to reflect that this promise was given too late to win England glory. Bartholomew Columbus set out at once to meet his brother and tell him of his success with the English King, only to find that Christopher had in the meantime sought help elsewhere, and, backed by the wealth and majesty of Spain, sailed away on his wonderful voyage.

Not till Columbus was dead, and another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, had reached the mainland of the continent that bears his name, did Europe realize that a new world had been discovered and not merely a fresh trade-route. Then other Bristol sailors under the command of some Italians, John Cabot and his son Sebastian, once more faced the Atlantic, conquered its waves, and planted the English flag on the shores of Newfoundland. To the disgust of those at home they brought back not gold and spices, but fish and whale-oil.

Yet the discovery of Newfoundland, by altering the course of the world's trade, was to transfer to ports on the Atlantic seaboard advantages that in mediaeval times had belonged to the Mediterranean. It was not, however, till the days of Henry VII's granddaughter, Elizabeth, that Englishmen became aware of this, and set out to develop the opportunities fate had offered them.

> " Here is the ocean gate. . . .
> Unto the setting sun and the unknown
> No more unknown."

The discovery of a new continent in the West was one of the events that mark the merging of mediaeval times in modern: but other changes scarcely less momentous were also at hand, since the world was growing up as well as expanding.

During the early Middle Ages, when the civilization of Europe was threatened by barbarian attacks from without and anarchy within, men and women had been willing to accept the claims made by Popes in Rome to decide vital questions of religion for all Christendom. In those days disputed cases of wills and marriages were taken as a matter of course to papal courts for final judgement: heretics of all nations were forced to conform to the one faith laid down by the Catholic Church or suffer at the stake: while a rebellious King, like John of England, could be compelled to lay down his crown in token of submission at the foot of the Pope's legate.

Europe, in fact, accepted her chief interests as being one and indivisible; until with the passing of centuries the nations of which she was composed, as they grew more settled and civilized, became also more conscious of separate race and aims. They now wished to think and act for themselves, resenting or disregarding outside interference; so that when early in the fifteenth century the Emperor Sigismund attempted to reconcile French and English in the midst of their Hundred Years' War, that their quarrels might not threaten the peace of the World Council he had just called together at Constance, he dismally failed in his object.

Even Popes and Emperors themselves were

affected by the spirit of the age, treating the problems with which they dealt more and more from the point of view of an Italian or German prince, rather than as world rulers. Their narrowed outlook reacted in its turn on public opinion that gradually throughout Europe began to question authorities and beliefs once considered infallible in their wisdom, and also to condemn the clergy whose loose and worldly lives made their claims to spiritual authority seem ridiculous.

To this critical movement, largely destructive of old ideas but also creative of new, has been given the name of " the Renaissance," or " New Birth." When Henry Tudor came to the throne of England it was already at work in Italy, where painters and sculptors were breathing life into the stiff forms of mediaeval art; and men of letters, " humanists " as they were called, were busy interpreting the old Greek and Latin classics, or working out schemes of ecclesiastical reform.

Had none but the monks in their cloisters been found to copy out by hand the books and translations written at this time in ever-increasing numbers, the new learning would have interested only a cultured few, and so died away with little stir. Towards the middle of the fifteenth century the discovery of printing was made; and thus, by the beginning of the sixteenth, just

when new ideas were ready to be scattered abroad, the means were also at hand for their distribution.

Presses were set up in England as well as in Italy and Germany, and books, that were not as to-day merely mechanical reproductions, but works of art in themselves, were published and sold throughout Europe.

This was a great help to students, and men began to read far more widely than ever before, and even to write books in their own language instead of clinging to the stiff Latin that the Middle Ages had taught them was the only polite medium of expression for scholars and authors. Not till the reign of Elizabeth was England to reap the fruits of such efforts, though Chaucer had written charming English poems two centuries before. But Elizabethan poets, like Elizabethan seamen, built on foundations which were laid in early Tudor times.

In the Middle Ages the pursuit of " letters " had been left mainly to Churchmen, and the ordinary young courtier or hunting squire would be reduced to yawns of boredom at the mere sight of crabbed writing on a page of vellum. The new learning in contrast became fashionable. In 1497 a young layman, John Colet, who had just returned from a course of study in Italy, the home of the Renaissance, lectured in Oxford

on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans to an enthusiastic audience.

Not merely was it something new that a layman should venture to deal with theology, but Colet's treatment of his subject was quite different from the old-fashioned method of dissecting every sentence to find allegories and allusions that in the end too often concealed the general sense of the passage in a mist of words. Instead he made St. Paul appear as a living person, and each of his epistles an actual letter that dealt with the doubts and errors of the men and women to whom he wrote.

Thus, in that lecture hall at Oxford, the scriptures like the art of painting in Italy came to life once more, and the influence of the pioneer work undertaken by Colet and other English " humanists " in teaching Greek and opening up fresh fields of thought radiated through the length and breadth of the land.

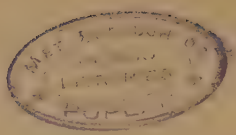
Henry VII was not himself a student, save of account-books, but he was determined that his children should have the best education possible, and his second son, Henry Duke of York, proved so apt a pupil that old-fashioned Englishmen believed his eager pursuit of learning must lead him to a career in the Church. In Latin, of course, like most lads of his day, Henry was well grounded at an early age. He soon learned to

speak French with ease, and later he picked up some knowledge of Italian and Spanish. His real talent, however, was for music. Besides playing on the lute, organ, and harpsichord, he has left us vocal and instrumental pieces of his own composition, and an anthem that is still a favourite with cathedral choirs.

The sorrow felt in England in 1502 at the death of Arthur Prince of Wales, Henry VII's eldest son, was considerably lessened by the thought that the next in line of succession was the King's namesake, this boy of ten, who already showed precocious dignity and a real taste for letters. Seven years later the old King himself passed away, and the young Prince of Wales ascended the throne as Henry VIII. Students of the new learning believed a golden age had dawned in England. " I have no fear," wrote Lord Mountjoy, both a courtier and a student, to the Dutchman Erasmus, one of the leaders of Renaissance scholarship, " but when you heard that our Prince . . . had succeeded to his father's throne, all your melancholy left you at once . . . when you know what a hero he now shows himself, how wisely he behaves, what a lover he is of justice and goodness, what affection he bears to the learned, I will venture to swear that you will need no wings to make you fly to behold this new and auspicious star."

Many others, besides learned folk, were of the same opinion, for we find a Venetian writing home at this time, "Love for the King is universal with all who see him, for His Highness does not seem a person of the world but one descended from Heaven."

Thus, on the foundations laid by Henry VII, it appeared in 1509 that a fair Tudor building, its fabric knit of peace, prosperity, and knowledge, was about to rise with little cost or trouble, merely as a token of royal goodwill towards obedient and adoring subjects.



Chapter III

THE TUDOR LION

DURING the early years of his reign Henry VIII more than fulfilled the happiest expectations of his subjects. Courtiers, inclined to form their opinions mainly from " the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man," claimed their prince to be " much handsomer than any other sovereign in Christendom, a great deal handsomer than the King of France " : while both English and foreign writers agreed in praising the physical fitness that underlay this youthful charm.

" He draws the bow with greater strength than any man in England and jousts marvellously," was one verdict; while another, describing him as " very fair and his whole frame admirably proportioned," goes on to say, " He is very fond of hunting and never takes his diversion without tiring eight or ten horses which he causes to be stationed beforehand along the line of country he means to take, and when one is tired he mounts another and before he gets home they are all exhausted. He is extremely fond of

tennis, at which game it is the prettiest thing in the world to see him play, his fair skin glowing through a shirt of the finest texture."

Wherever he went applause greeted this royal athlete, redoubled when it appeared that nature had made him as generous and understanding of the needs of his subjects as he was pleasing to the eye. " Avarice is expelled the country," wrote the enthusiastic Lord Mountjoy to Erasmus, and others were of a like opinion when they heard of the arrest of those " two ravening wolves," Empson and Dudley, whose fines and exactions had preyed so heavily on England during the last years of the old King's reign.

By a Bill of Attainder that required no evidence of guilt, only the assent of the two Houses of Parliament and the Crown, the hated ministers passed to their death on Tower Hill without a voice being raised to plead in the name of justice that their deeds, however tyrannical, had been committed by royal command.

Rough justice was popular in England in these years when her public conscience was only half developed, and the young King, a child of his generation, was quite of the same mind and prepared to act the part required of him. Lord Mountjoy wrote that " he does not desire gold, or gems, or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality." Putting aside the difficult ques-

tion of virtue, there was truth in this assertion, for the royal treasury being full, the King was well content with the state of his finances; and when in 1511, looking round for the most agreeable way in which to acquire "glory and immortality," he declared war on France, neither he nor the nation that applauded his decision sat down to count the cost.

After a period of misfortune due to Henry's inexperience and the treachery of his allies, victory crowned the English arms, but the prospects were not so fair as a few years earlier. The royal coffers were leaking badly, and Parliament did not prove so eager to fill them as to send Empson and Dudley to the scaffold. Only the young King remained quite unconcerned as to the ways and means of providing for his pleasures.

He had been brought up to expect luxury, though quite capable of enduring hardships, and even in camp had scarcely shared the rigours of a soldier's life. Borne on fourteen wagons, his house of timber had followed him from halt to halt, with a good stock of feather beds, folding tables and chairs, linen and plate, as well as a host of cooks and serving men, and even a full choir of one hundred voices and musicians to cheer the royal leisure.

At home on his return there was "continual feasting" at the Court, and Henry must steal

away, when he could, from his hunting, dancing, music, and books to sign the State papers laid before him by his industrious minister, Thomas Wolsey. In spite of the good education he had received, he was once heard to confess " writing is to me somewhat tedious and painful ": and he was well content therefore, so long as things went well, to leave the transaction of public affairs to the man he had raised from insignificance to be Archbishop of York and Lord Chancellor of the Realm.

In his play " Henry VIII," Shakespeare has left us a picture of what Elizabethans thought of this arrogant, all-sufficient minister whom the Pope, to please his master, created a Cardinal. " No man's pie is freed from his ambitious finger," declares the Duke of Buckingham in the opening scene, while another courtier says: " I can see his pride peep through each part of him." And their words bear out the opinion of Wolsey's own day when he received the nickname of " the King himself."

" His Majesty will do so and so," he would announce during the earlier stages of his career, but later the phrase was changed to " We will do so and so "; and the son of the Suffolk sheep-farmer seemed to delight in vaunting his own importance by a display of royal state, while he humiliated the nobles, who, cap in hand, haunted

his antechamber in order to beg for favours or gain his influence with the King.

Below this arrogance, however, lay a purpose, the exaltation of the royal power in the eyes of the nation, for Wolsey had been brought up in the political views of Henry VII, and believed that the throne should be independent of any control whether by baronage, church, or parliament. Great was his indignation then when he found he could not browbeat the House of Commons into granting the taxes he desired; with the result that for several years Parliament was not summoned at all, while efforts were made to raise the money necessary for the expenses of an extravagant court by other means.

"There will be no rest from payment so long as Someone lives," murmured the people of Kent, laying the burden of their dislike on the shoulders of the unpopular minister, while they continued, like the rest of England, to admire and applaud their King, still in the strength and good humour of his early manhood.

Yet Henry himself was not so carelessly satisfied with life as of old, for he had found it would not grant him everything he wished. His treasury emptied quicker than it filled; the fair fields of France were not to be won in a few showy campaigns; while, instead of the son for whom he longed to make the Tudor hold on the

throne secure, he had merely a sickly daughter, the Princess Mary, whose mother, Queen Catharine, seemed unlikely to bear him another child.

This desire for a son rankled in Henry's mind all the more because he had ceased to care for the Queen, who was six years his senior, and wished to send her away and marry one of the ladies at his Court, the beautiful black-eyed Anne Boleyn.

Catharine had been first of all his brother Arthur's wife, and Henry now told himself that, in spite of the papal dispensation he had received at the time, allowing him to wed with so close a relation as a sister-in-law, he should never have done so, and even persuaded himself that, during the eighteen years that had passed since his marriage, he had always felt scruples on the matter.

To Wolsey he maintained that God, by denying him a son, had clearly shown His displeasure, and he therefore insisted that his minister should induce the Pope to revoke the previous dispensation and annul the marriage, thus enabling him to marry again. From the moment when he came to this decision his real reign begins, a reign that was to sweep away the mediaeval government of Church and State and lay the foundations of a new England.

Hitherto in politics Henry had seemed, to foreigners at any rate, merely a handsome figurehead, though the subjects who knew him best

held a very different opinion. Sir Thomas More, one of the English "humanists" and Henry's personal friend, declared "Could my head win the King a castle in France it would not fail to go"; and Wolsey, struggling with the impossible task his master had set him, admitted that "sooner than miss any part of his will he would endanger one-half his kingdom."

This prophecy was quickly justified: for the Pope (none too eager on his own account to set aside a papal dispensation) was stiffened in his resistance by Queen Catharine's prayers and still more by the threats of her nephew, the powerful Emperor Charles V, who regarded the English King's sudden declaration of his scruples as an insult to his family. Henry ran the risk of being excommunicated, or of finding himself at war with the Emperor, but it never occurred to him that it might be wiser to give way. Instead, he insisted that the Pope should pronounce sentence in his favour, or, otherwise, he would seek a more complaisant judge before whom to bring his case. Thus, when it became obvious that Rome was not to be won, the English King appealed to the Universities of Europe, and, having got from learned men some opinions in his favour, he commanded that his marriage with Catharine, his brother's wife, be declared publicly null and void. Shortly afterwards he arranged that Anne Boleyn, whom

in his impatience he had secretly married, should be crowned at Westminster.

In this way the breach between England and Rome, that we call the Reformation, began with a king's selfish whim. The breach seemed at the time a mere crack in the unity of Christendom that might be easily filled in with a little compromise and plastered over with tact. In reality, however, the crack was destined to widen into an unbridgeable gulf.

To understand this gulf we must consider again " the Renaissance." This movement was partly a revolt of the minds of men against mediaeval beliefs, partly an assertion of national independence, and partly also on its religious side a condemnation of the corrupt life of the Church. Everywhere in Europe towards the close of the Middle Ages there were signs that the old faith was losing its hold on the hearts of men, even of those men who were expected to be the guides of others. Popes and bishops were more often worldly statesmen like Thomas Wolsey, than shepherds of their flock: monks regarded their monasteries as homes of ease and pleasure: village priests did not trouble to lead an existence more moral than that of their parishioners.

Humanists, such as Erasmus, Colet, and Sir Thomas More, joined in denouncing the super-

stition and low standard of religious life in their day, and demanded drastic reforms. When, however, in Germany in the early days of the sixteenth century Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, finding his own protests on this matter unavailing, declared publicly that reform was impossible so long as it was sought in Rome, the centre of corruption, many of them drew back dismayed. It seemed to them that to break away from Rome would be to endanger the whole fabric of the Church.

Henry VIII himself, still a young man, was particularly angry with Luther, and wrote a book to confute the monk's arguments. For doing so he received from a grateful Pope the title " Defender of the Faith," still printed in Latin on our English coins. Later, when at variance with Rome about his own marriage, he began to think differently of Luther's revolt that had by this time widened out in Germany into that big movement, the Protestant Reformation. He still did not approve of the new doctrines Luther had adopted. To the end of his days he clung to the Roman creed, insisting that his subjects should do the same or go to the stake; but on the other hand he welcomed the theory that national churches ought to be subject to their own governments, and not owe any allegiance to a foreign Pope.

In 1529 he called together a Parliament which sat for seven years, and is known as the Reformation Parliament. Its first business was to carry out the policy of separation from Rome on which he had determined. It secured for the crown the taxes that the English Church had usually paid into the papal treasury; it proclaimed Henry "Supreme Head of the Church of England"; and it passed an Act of Succession which declared that the King's new marriage was "true, sincere, and perfect," and that "the succession to the throne should rest in the children of Queen Anne."

"If a lion knew his strength," Sir Thomas More had once said, "it were hard for any man to rule him," and, thanks to the Cardinal's policy of centring all power in the crown, and his own stubborn will, the royal lion was at last aware of his strength.

Those who failed to secure his utmost pleasure, ministers such as Wolsey and his successor Thomas Cromwell, were ruthlessly cast aside as soon as they ceased to be of use: those who opposed him, former friends such as Sir Thomas More, who, for conscience' sake refused to accept the separation from Rome, were sent to the scaffold, while those who dared to rise in revolt against his new policy towards the Church were quelled with merciless severity.

"I am the State" might be said as truly of Henry VIII as of Louis XIV: but where the French King had armies to enforce his will, the Tudor could rely only on the terror or popularity, by means of which he browbeat or persuaded his Parliaments into passing Bills of Attainder against his enemies and accepting his tyrannical acts as their own.

At first sight it seems strange that Englishmen, who have always the reputation of loving liberty, and were in Tudor times regarded as the most turbulent people in Europe, should prove so easily driven and even obsequious; but in judging their attitude we must not forget that they dreaded a return to the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses. "No more Civil War" was the first consideration for every thinking man or woman, and to these Henry stood as the symbol of a settled Government; while in his quarrel with the Pope he appeared to many others as the symbol of the national dislike of foreign interference in home affairs.

There had long been an undercurrent of resentment in England at the amount of money which yearly passed out of the country in the form of papal taxes, and still more as stipends to Italian bishops and priests who never visited or took any interest in their English livings. As on the Continent so across the Channel at the

beginning of the sixteenth century, the torch of faith within the Church burned dim; and where in old days the monasteries and convents had been centres of spiritual life and material progress, now they appeared backwaters where neither the new learning, nor up-to-date methods of farming and commerce, could push against the stagnant tide of custom.

Enterprising people had largely ceased either to enter the monastic orders themselves or to add to their revenues, the wealthy leaving their money instead to endow schools or erect public buildings such as guildhalls. Thomas Wolsey himself made use of his authority to close some of the smaller monasteries in order to apply their funds to his " Cardinal College " at Oxford, now called Christ Church, and the example he set was imitated on a large scale by Thomas Cromwell when it became necessary for that minister to provide his exacting master with more money.

Parliament which, even when most obsequious, was sullen and obstinate where national taxation was concerned, welcomed with relief the suggestion that the treasury should be filled at the expense of the Church. With little opposition it passed Acts dissolving the monasteries and convents throughout the kingdom; and monks and nuns were turned adrift, sometimes with

small pensions but often with nothing but a beggar's licence between them and starvation. Royal agents stripped the chapels of their plate and jewels, the buildings of their lead; while the King put the Church lands up to auction amongst his nobles, and proceeded to use the money he obtained partly in defending his coasts but mostly on Court expenditure.

Not everywhere in England did people applaud this policy of spoliation. There were those in the countryside who loved the monks and the nuns for the charity they had always shown to the poor, and who resented the changes introduced into the Church. Times were hard, with a great deal of unemployment, and men and women who were homeless or without work now found there was nowhere left to which they could go in search of food and shelter.

Since agriculture gave small profits, farmers were busy turning their estates into sheep-runs in order to supply the ever-increasing demand on the Continent for English wool, but prosperity by this means came at first only to the few.

> " I thank my God and ever shall
> It was the sheep that paid for all "

was a pious sentiment for landowners: it roused no echo in the hearts of the labouring class, once required in large numbers to plant and sow and

drive the plough down the long furrows, but now replaced by an occasional shepherd lad.

The Yorkshire rebellion of 1536, called " the Pilgrimage of Grace," expressed popular indignation at all these changes, whether religious or economic; but when the General of the King's troops appealed to the loyalty of the insurgents it became clear that they still loved the King, and threw the blame for all their grievances upon his counsellors. On the promise that their grievances should be considered, even the leaders cried " We will wear no badge but that of our lord, the King." Their followers then threw down their arms and returned home satisfied; but the leaders were arrested, drawn on hurdles to the gallows, and hanged as a warning and example to all who dared resist Henry's good pleasure.

As for the Pilgrims' petitions that he had promised to consider, Henry left them for time to settle, acting on the comfortable Tudor theory that subjects must expect to make sacrifices for the State. When he had exhausted the wealth of the monasteries he began to debase the coinage, adding false metal to the good in such quantities that a silver piece became worth only a fraction of its former value.

Prices rose in consequence, and landlords, in order to make more money from their estates,

enclosed the waste ground of their manors, sometimes for the general good, as when they sowed crops on hitherto barren soil, but more often with evil results, because they took away the Commons, on which the villagers had been wont to graze their goats and pigs, and added them to their private sheep-runs.

The last years of Henry VIII's reign are indeed a mocking comment on Lord Mountjoy's early expectations. Avarice had fled the country only to return. If England, by withstanding the thunder of Pope and Emperor, had gained a certain "glory and immortality" abroad, at home on the other hand poverty and distress were widespread.

With regard to the King's personal affairs, the sequel to his repudiation of Catharine of Aragon and his marriage with Anne Boleyn had been first the birth of a daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, and then the trial and execution of her mother on a charge of unfaithfulness. Whether the charge was true or false, Henry's real reasons for putting Anne out of the way were first that she had not provided him with a male heir, and secondly, that he had fallen in love with another lady.

In less than a week after the guns from Tower Hill had announced Anne Boleyn's death, the King married Jane Seymour. Little more than

a year later the new Queen died, giving birth to a son who was christened Edward after his Yorkist grandfather. His father did not waste much time in mourning for Queen Jane. Three other wives were to win Henry notoriety as the most married monarch in English history, but none gave him further heirs; and thus, when in 1547 the old lion died, the fate of the Tudor dynasty hung on the lives of a delicate boy of ten and his two sisters, the Princess Mary, daughter of Catharine of Aragon, and the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn.

It is with the fortunes of the younger, Elizabeth, this book will deal, but neither her character nor the story of her life and rule could be clearly understood without some knowledge of her inheritance from the past, or of the principal events of previous Tudor reigns.

Chapter IV

THE GIRLHOOD OF ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH TUDOR was born at Greenwich Palace on Sunday, 7th September 1533, " to the great disappointment and sorrow of the King " as the Imperial Ambassador wrote secretly to his master, Charles V. Henry had indeed been counting on a son, but he was still enough in love with Anne Boleyn to conceal his annoyance from the public at large, and gave orders that the royal infant should be " received with all outward signs of exultant welcome," heralds at the church door proclaiming her immediately after her christening " Princess of England."

He himself did not, so far as we know, take much interest in this unwanted little daughter, save on one occasion early in 1536, when news was brought to the Court of the death of Catharine of Aragon at her home in the country. " God be thanked! " exclaimed Henry heartlessly, and having dressed himself in yellow and dined in state with Anne Boleyn, he carried the little Princess Elizabeth round the room in his arms for his Court to see and admire.

Most of Elizabeth's childhood was, however, spent not in London but at one of the royal residences in the country, in the charge of a governess; and while she was at Hatfield in Hertfordshire, it was arranged by her mother that she should be joined by her elder half-sister Mary, Catharine of Aragon's daughter, now a girl in her teens. This was done to humiliate Mary whom Anne Boleyn hated, both because she was her rival's child, and also on account of the dignity with which she assumed the position of rightful heir to the throne.

Mary had been informed, soon after Elizabeth's birth, that in future she must yield place on all public occasions to her little sister, the daughter of the Queen, to which she replied: " I know no Queen of England except my mother."

" Box her ears! " wrote Anne in a fury when the governess, who was a relation of her own, reported this remark. Later, since neither threats nor punishments had availed to overcome her step-daughter's disdain, she herself went down to Hatfield and promised that she would speak to the King on Mary's behalf if only she would be sensible and submit to the new order of things in England.

Mary was not to be thus easily won. In character she was a true Spaniard, very proud, very affectionate to her friends, violent in her

hatred of her enemies. She was also as obstinate as the King her father. Though compelled by force in the days that followed to yield precedence to Anne Boleyn's daughter, she did so under protest, and never forgot nor forgave the insult. In this way rivalry and distrust were sown between the sisters, later to bear evil fruit, though in these early days the infant Elizabeth must have wondered at the dislike with which her companion so obviously regarded her.

She herself was described by her governess, in a letter written at the time of her mother's execution to Thomas Cromwell, then royal minister, as " a toward child and as gentle of conditions as ever I knew in my life." Yet at the age of three she already possessed her share of Tudor self-will.

It was the policy of Mr. Shelton, the gentleman in charge of the household at Hatfield, to emphasize Elizabeth's royal birth by insisting, among other things, that she should dine in state every day.

" Alas! my lord," urged the governess, " it is not meet for a child of her age to keep such state yet. I promise you, my lord, I dare not take it upon me to keep her Grace in health an' she keep that rule. For there she shall see divers meats and fruits and wine which it would be hard for me to restrain her Grace from." A few

lines farther on she confesses " God knoweth my lady hath great pains with her great teeth and they come very slowly forth, which causeth me to suffer Her Grace to have her will more than I would."

But there were worse difficulties to be faced than the conquest of a child's self-will. Events at Court were moving rapidly, and when in May 1536 Anne Boleyn was sent to the scaffold, few cared whether her little daughter had sufficient clothes, or if the expenses of the house at Hatfield were duly paid. " My lady is put from that degree she was afore," wrote her governess in despair, " and what degree she is of now I know not but by hearsay."

Henry VIII himself was indifferent on the subject, especially after the birth in the following year of his long desired son. It was left for his sixth wife, Catharine Parr, who was a kindly woman, to restore both daughters to his favour; and towards the close of his reign he decided to name them in his will as lawful successors to Prince Edward, should the latter die without heirs, Mary's name being put first in the line of succession and then that of Elizabeth.

While circumstances hindered the growth of any affection between the sisters, Elizabeth became fond of the brother who was only four years her junior. At the age of six she made him

a cambric shirt with her own hands, and later he was often her companion in the country, sharing her studies and her very real love of reading.

The Renaissance we have seen made learning fashionable, and though an occasional old-fashioned gentleman might grumble that he would " sooner have his son hanged than a bookworm," most parents of good social position provided their children with men of letters as tutors or sent them to school where knowledge was flogged into them with merciless severity. " The birch," says one old doctor, " serveth for many good uses and for none better than beating of stubborn boys that either lie or will not learn," but the " humanists " on the whole did not believe that punishments produced good scholars.

Ascham, author of *The Scholemaster*, says of the boys of his day, " they went to the Grammar-School little children, they came thence great lubbers, always learning and little profiting." His own methods were milder, and he describes how one of his pupils, Lady Jane Grey, a cousin of the King, loved the peace of her lesson hours in contrast to the rest of her life when, as she told him, " Whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, or go, eat, drink, be merry, or sad, be sewing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else, I must do it even as perfectly as God made the world, or

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My Lorde your great gentilnis and good wil towarde me as wel in this thinge as in other thinges I do understande, for the wiche euen as I ought, so I do giue you most humble thankes. And wheras your Lordshipe willeth and counselleth me as a ernest frende to declare what I knowe in this matter, and also to write what I haue declared to Master Tirwit I shal most willingely do it. I declared vnto him first that after that the Coferar had declared unto me what my Lorde Admiral answered for Alms matter, and for Dyram place, that it was appointed to be a minte, he tolde me that my Lorde Admiral did offer me his house for my time beinge with the Kinges Maieste. And further sayd and asked me wether if the counsel did consente that I shulde haue my Lord Admiral wether I wolde consente to it or no. I answered that I wolde not tel him what my minde was, and I inquired further of him what he mente to aske me that question or who bad him say so, he answered me and said no bodye bad him say so, but that he parsched (as he thoght) by my Lorde Admirals inquiringe wither my patente were sealed or no. and debatinge what he spente in his house, and

else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea sometimes with pinches, nips, and bobs, that I think myself in misery."

The Princess Elizabeth was also a pupil of Ascham, and, writing to a friend abroad, he describes her in her sixteenth year as " shining like a star " among the many learned ladies of her time. " French and Italian she speaks like English, Latin with fluency, propriety, and good judgement; she also spoke Greek with me frequently, willingly, and moderately well. Nothing can be more elegant than her handwriting."

Elizabeth's letters at this time show that her writing did deserve his praise, but the good man goes on to say, " with respect to personal decoration she greatly prefers a simple elegance to show and splendour . . . despising the outward adorning of plaiting the hair and wearing gold." This makes us rub our eyes and ask whether such a staid young lady could ever have developed into the Elizabeth whose wardrobe of three thousand gowns and eighty wigs is nearly as famous in history as the number of her father's wives.

Her brother Edward was as much deceived as Ascham, and spoke of her as " his sweet sister Temperance." Clearly Elizabeth was already an accomplished little hypocrite able to deceive even those of her household who, like Ascham,

saw her daily. Long before she was sixteen she had learned, besides languages and an elegant handwriting, and in a harder school, the same lessons of caution and dissimulation that adversity had taught her grandfather Henry VII. "We princes," she wrote later, when she was Queen, "are set as it were upon stages in the sight and view of all the world," and very early she became aware that in her case a large part of this watching, prying world was hostile.

First, of course, there were her sister Mary and the Catholics. It was only natural they should hate and fear the daughter of the woman they considered the source of all their troubles; but, in addition, there were others of the Protestant party, either seeking to do her deliberate harm or to use her for their own ends, without any thought of the danger into which their actions might bring her.

Before the old King died in 1547 he had arranged that public affairs during his son's minority should be managed by a Council of Regency, but this Council was dominated from the first by one of the young King's uncles, Edward Seymour, who, as Duke of Somerset, became the real ruler of the kingdom.

Somerset was in many ways a fine character, with high ideals and a sincere desire to improve the state of the country, but he lacked both the

personality and prestige of Henry VIII. Tudor England preferred to put its trust in its king rather than in Parliament, but neither the turbulent nobility nor the people generally were prepared to show the same submissive loyalty towards an upstart " Lord Protector " as they offered to their natural sovereign.

Least loyal of all the State officials with whom Somerset must co-operate in governing the kingdom was his younger brother, Thomas Lord Seymour of Sudeley, whom he had made Lord High Admiral. " I can do better without the Protector than the Protector without me," was the boast of this ambitious noble who, within a few weeks of Henry's death, married Queen Catharine Parr, and, when about a year later he was left a widower, instantly paid secret court to the Princess Elizabeth, trying to induce her to promise that she would marry him.

Seymour, like his elder brother, was a Protestant and approved of the changes in religion that Somerset was introducing into the Church in the young King's name. At the same time, recognizing that Edward's life was frail and the lad might easily never grow to manhood, he saw in the Princess Elizabeth the most obvious hope of all those who, dreading Mary's possible accession and a return to the old faith, were trying to guard against it. If by their efforts

Henry's will could be set aside and Anne Boleyn's daughter declared heiress to the throne, he calculated that this daughter's husband would become necessarily the most important man in England. This was the Admiral's fixed ambition, and so he professed his love and admiration for the young Princess, and Elizabeth, born greedy of compliments, flirted and played with his attentions, without, however, committing herself to an actual promise of marriage.

At last the Admiral, over-reaching himself in his plots, was arrested on a charge of treason and sent to the block. Elizabeth fell into disgrace as well, and was henceforth regarded with suspicion by the Council of Regency which believed, though it could not actually prove, that she had shared the traitor's ambitions. Her reported comment on hearing of Seymour's execution, " this day died a man with much wit and very little judgement," does not make it appear that her feelings had been very greatly stirred by her suitor; but again, since she knew herself surrounded by Somerset's spies, such a callous remark may have been mere play-acting.

Frightened by the danger in which she now stood, it was her object to appear henceforth as the demure maiden in whose eyes neither politics not the frivolous life of a Court were of any real importance, and for the remainder of Edward's

reign she lived in quiet retirement with her books.

It proved a short reign, but six years in length, a troublous time when no man trusted his neighbour, and few were faithful to any party or creed. The spirit of change was in the air, and the Reformation, that in England had hitherto mainly concerned itself with questions of Church government and the separation from Rome, became more definitely Protestant in doctrine.

Prayer-books were issued in English, crucifixes and images were torn down, coloured frescoes on the walls of churches were whitewashed, and the old parish priests replaced by reformers, many of them followers of the French Protestant, John Calvin, who in 1542 had set up a model church at Geneva, far more extreme in its views and hostile to Rome than that of Martin Luther.

In London and the seaport towns, where the daily business of men and women brought them in touch with foreigners and fresh ideas, this transformation was welcomed, but in the country neighbourhoods there was no affection for the new-fangled doctrines and a not unfounded suspicion of the motives of those who professed them most loudly. " Many," said old Bishop Latimer, one of the most ardent and sincere reformers of his day, " became lovers of the

Gospel for the Church lands." This was an accusation that could be brought against the greater number of the Council of Regency, including Somerset himself.

The movement, which had begun before the Reformation with the pulling down of a few half empty monasteries to found a College, had by now degenerated into a policy of confiscation of other people's property on any pretext that could be given the colour of law. The proceeds from monasteries and convents having been squandered, the greedy councillors of King Edward clutched at the revenues of the Guilds, or mediaeval trade-unions, making the excuse that these had been employed for superstitious purposes such as the acting of Miracle Plays on the festivals of their patron saints. The fact that Guilds had also provided sickness benefit and financial help for their members in distress was ignored.

"Each man for himself" might be taken as the motto of these middle years of the sixteenth century, when only a few of those in authority, like Bishop Latimer, cared for the many who had gone down in the struggle for existence, or protested against public indifference to their fate.

The Lord Protector, in spite of private greed, showed some sense of national responsibility;

for during the years when he was in power, laws were passed to prevent the further enclosure of common lands, and the way in which numberless acres under the plough were being turned into sheep-farms. Measures were also framed to deal with unemployment, but the Protector could find no real support in carrying them out, and so they came to nothing and won their author only unpopularity and suspicion.

The people of the West of England rebelled against the new prayer-book, the people of Norfolk and Suffolk against bad social conditions, while at the council-board and in Parliament Somerset's enemies openly mocked him for his lack of authority and plotted his downfall. "What see-eth your Grace . . .? Marry, the King's subjects out of all discipline . . . what is the matter? . . . Marry, sir, liberty! liberty! and your Grace's too much gentleness." In 1549 the Protector was attacked at the council-board, arrested, sent to the Tower, and afterwards beheaded.

England now fell under the rule of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, Duke of Northumberland as he was created by the young King. He was a son of the Dudley who had been the "horse-leech" of Henry VII, and was even more ambitious than his rival Somerset, while wholly unscrupulous and without heart. To

him religion was merely a matter of convenience. He professed to be a Calvinist, but in reality looked on his faith only as a means towards establishing his own family on the throne of England.

By his will Henry VIII had, as we have seen, settled the succession first on his son and then on his daughters Mary and Elizabeth. Should all three die without heirs it was decreed that the crown should pass not to the children of his elder sister Margaret, who had married the King of Scotland, and therefore to English minds become something of a foreigner, but to the descendants of his younger sister, Mary Duchess of Suffolk.

The line of Duchess Mary by the middle of the sixteenth century was represented by three sisters, the ladies Jane, Catharine, and Mary Grey, her granddaughters; and the Duke of Northumberland, seeing that the young King was at the point of death, hastily married his son, Guildford Dudley, a lad of seventeen, to Lady Jane, who was about the same age, and then set himself to arrange that his daughter-in-law should be proclaimed by Edward as his successor.

Amongst all the self-seeking worthless crew who at this time brought disgrace on the ideals of the Reformation, Edward VI stands out in contrast for his sincerity and earnest desire for

good government. Seated in his garden he would listen to Latimer's outspoken sermons on the state of the country and Church, and afterwards plan in his note-books the improvements he intended to make.

"When he comes of age he will hang up a score of knaves," prophesied his subjects, groaning under the tyranny of the Council of Regency, but a day came when Edward realized in despair that he would never come of age nor his plans find fulfilment. Worse than this, all the work of establishing in England the new beliefs for which he cared so ardently would be undone by his legal successor, his elder sister Mary.

While he meditated gloomily on this prospect Northumberland, of whose religious sincerity he had no doubt, came to him and began to urge him secretly to safeguard the reformed faith after his death. This he assured him could only be done by excluding from the succession both Catholic Mary and his sister Elizabeth, whose Protestant sympathies had no real foundation. The one certain champion of the true cause was his cousin of the Suffolk line, Lady Jane Grey, and since the boy had always liked and trusted her he was at last persuaded to proclaim her his heir.

Northumberland's bold and unscrupulous plot was so little liked at Court when it leaked out,

that it was only by leading the judges to the bedside of the dying King, letters patent were at last drawn up under his instructions setting aside his father's will in favour of his own settlement. With equal difficulty, partly by threats and for the rest through bribery, the Duke obtained the signatures of the majority of his fellow councillors; but there had been so much delay and hesitation that ere his preparations were complete the young King passed away.

For three days Edward's death was concealed from the world at large while Northumberland sent messengers hot-foot to bring the two princesses up from the country on the pretext of receiving their brother's last commands. Had they listened to this appeal, the whole history of England might have been changed; but the birds were not so easily snared.

The Duke's messengers discovered that Mary was already on the road to Norfolk, where partisans were gathering to her banner. Elizabeth lay at Hatfield too ill, as her attendants reported, to face a journey, however short.

Chapter V

THE RIVAL SISTERS

As soon as the Duke of Northumberland found that the Princess Elizabeth either would not, or could not, come to Greenwich at his summons, he sent further messengers to her with the news of her brother's death, and of the settlement he had made when dying, apparently on the advice of his Council of Regency. According to the account she received the Lady Jane Dudley had been proclaimed Queen in London, at the Cross in Cheapside, at St. Paul's, and in Fleet Street amid general rejoicing, while no one in the crowd had either asked or cared what had become of the late King's sisters. All the same the Duke hinted that, out of the goodwill he bore Elizabeth, he was ready to buy any claims to the throne she might consider she possessed. Let her but put her signature to a deed surrendering all right to the throne, and she should be assured of lands and revenue for the rest of her life.

To the first part of the communication the Princess had listened in silence, but now she

interrupted, pointing out gently to the messengers that " they must first make their agreement with her elder sister during whose lifetime she had no claim or title to resign," and no other answer could they induce her to send.

Northumberland must have smiled wryly at such discretion. It was almost as if Elizabeth had guessed that, instead of showing delight, the crowds had heard the proclamation of Queen Jane for the most part in apathetic silence. She might be young, fair, a Protestant . . . but she was the wife of a Dudley, and King Harry had not named her as his son's successor. For all she was put forward as a champion of the Reformed Faith, London expressed no joy in its new sovereign when she was borne in state through the streets to take up her residence in the Tower. Indeed, one daring apprentice was heard to shout " Queen Mary hath the better title," and paid for his candour with some hours in the pillory and the loss of both his ears.

There were no further unpleasant incidents in the procession after this, but the Duke had become uneasily conscious of a background of suspicion and dislike. The Princess Elizabeth had suggested that any bargain about the crown must first be struck with her elder sister, yet far from wishing to bargain, Mary had from the beginning taken up an attitude of haughty

independence. In a letter signed by her as Queen she sharply recalled the royal council to its true allegiance, and Northumberland, as he studied the faces of his colleagues after this had been read aloud, wondered how many, even of those he had bribed most heavily with promises of rank and office, were still prepared to support him loyally.

Mary herself was in Norfolk with 30,000 volunteers, while report said not merely the Catholics of the North had risen on her behalf but also the Protestants of the West country on whose help Northumberland had counted for religious reasons. If Queen Jane's throne was to be saved, someone must lead her armies forth and strike her enemies down before it was too late. Yet whom could he trust? Glancing round the Council table, the Duke could answer this question only with his own name; and so, not many days later, set out from London, his horsemen making their way with difficulty through the crowded streets.

"The people press on us," he muttered, looking furtively down on that silent throng, "but no one says God speed."

It was the same everywhere, until the infection of hatred and distrust with which the Duke was regarded spread to those who rode beside him and at his heels; and the very men with his

badge upon their shoulders flung down their arms and shouted for Queen Mary till their throats were hoarse. England was determined not to have another civil war. She was tired of Lord Protectors and ambitious nobles who cloaked their private greed under a pretence of affection for God's Word. If their works were the fruits of the Reformation, the majority of Englishmen were prepared to face a return to the old faith and the old ways of religion. Only they demanded that they should have King Harry's daughter for their Queen as he had willed they should.

Bowing to the force of public opinion he had hitherto despised, Northumberland himself, in the market-place at Cambridge, lifted his hat and cried in quavering tones, the tears of shame and disappointment running down his cheeks, " God save Queen Mary! "

Henceforth he sought only how he might save his life. No confession of his crimes was too abject for him to make, no repudiation of all he had pretended to hold most sacred beyond his conscience. In the Tower, where his daughter-in-law had held her court by his command, and now thankfully exchanged its pretensions for a prison cell, he spent his time writing petitions for mercy on the plea that he had always been a Catholic at heart and repented nothing so greatly

as " those sixteen years we have erred from the faith." " Is my crime," he demanded, " so heinous as no redemption but my blood can wash away the spots thereof . . .? Oh that it would please her good Grace to give me life, yea the life of a dog, if I might but live and kiss her feet."

The appeal went unanswered, and on the 22nd of August 1553 Northumberland passed to the death on Tower Hill to which he had condemned many a better man.

There were those in Mary's Court who urged that the moment was ripe to make an end of the whole Dudley brood, including the usurper Lady Jane; but the Queen, though she agreed it would be wise for the present to keep her young cousin and her husband under lock and key, would not consent to their execution. They had been the dupes of others, she pointed out, not themselves the instigators of rebellion.

For all the evil report with which later events were to stain her name, Mary Tudor was not by nature cruel, and the happiness that now, for the first time in her thirty-seven years, seemed within her grasp made her both tender-hearted and forgiving. When Elizabeth, hearing of her victory, hastened to offer her congratulations they were accepted graciously, and the sisters made a triumphal entry into London amid

" bell-ringing, bonfires, and shouts of applause," a very different welcome to the silence that had greeted the unhappy Lady Jane.

For the moment all was fair; but when the actual work of government began, the clouds blew up apace; and the new Queen, inheriting her father's obstinacy without his insight or tact, proved the last type of ruler to scatter them successfully. Through years of neglect and disgrace she had brooded on what she would do if God was ever to entrust her with the authority of King Henry, setting herself to realize two ambitions. One was the, to her, sacred duty of restoring a heretic land to the faith of its fathers, the other a determination to form a close alliance with Spain, her mother's country, whose ambassadors had always upheld and pleaded her cause.

Spain, in the religious duel fought on the Continent during the sixteenth century, was the champion of Catholicism, her sovereign " the Catholic King." Thus, to Mary, a marriage with Philip, eldest son of the Emperor Charles V and heir to the crown of Spain, meant not merely an alliance with one of her own race, for she loved to think of herself as Castilian rather than English, but still more the strengthening of her hand in the task of reform and conversion that was to be her lifework.

For this very reason the proposed match was

cordially disliked by many of Mary's subjects. Willing enough to return with her to that " middle road " between the claims of Pope and Protestant reformers down which King Henry had driven the national Church, they had no wish whatever for actual re-union with Rome. Some trembled for the safety of fortunes built on the sale of monastic lands, others had gloomy visions of fresh papal taxes and of a Spanish King enforcing foreign decrees on Englishmen with sword and stake.

Mary, it was widely felt, would do far better if she chose a husband at home, and Parliament, plucking up its courage, petitioned that she would accept Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon, the handsome but feckless heir of the Yorkist line. Because of his birth and his father's supposed disloyalty this unfortunate young man had been kept a prisoner in the Tower for the greater part of his boyhood, and now, on being released, found a crown dangled before his eyes by public opinion. Too weak and vain to support such a change of fortune, he strutted about among his friends, insisting that they should treat him as a prince of the blood royal and openly boasting of the great match he was about to make.

The Queen, when the report came to her ears, was very angry. Parliament she snubbed for its pains. " For your desire to see us married we

thank you; your desire to dictate to us the consort whom we shall choose we consider somewhat superfluous. . . . We shall marry as God shall direct our choice, to His honour and to our country's good." To this speech she would hear no reply, and the Commons were dismissed, but she could not silence so easily the growing resentment of the nation when it learned that her choice was indeed a Castilian prince and not young Courtenay.

In 1554 risings broke out in Kent and the Midlands; their object being either to compel Mary to give up this foreign alliance or else to depose her in favour of the Princess Elizabeth, whose name was freely coupled with that of the popular Earl of Devon. "I go to save my country from Spanish slavery," cried one of the rebel leaders, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and won so many volunteers with this appeal that, while the risings in other parts of the country were quickly suppressed, he and his Kentish men marched in triumph up to the walls of London. For a time it seemed as though both Mary herself and her capital, since she refused to leave it, were in danger; but her courage and the loyalty of the citizens saved the day. After a short struggle Wyatt himself was taken prisoner, while his raggle-tail army fled in all directions.

Once more Mary was triumphant over her

enemies, but her mood of mercy had passed. Wyatt, the Duke of Suffolk, and other rebel leaders were speedily condemned to death and executed. That was only justice, but when the imperial ambassador whispered in her ear that there would be no peace in her kingdom until Suffolk's daughter, the Lady Jane Dudley, and her husband, Northumberland's son, were also in their graves, she listened readily enough and signed their death warrants.

On the 12th of February 1554 they were sent to the block on Tower Green instead of on the hill outside, lest their youth and innocence should move the crowd to pity. There, with a quiet courage that put to shame Northumberland's whining prayers, the Nine Days' Queen suffered for his ambitions.

The imperial ambassador, pleased but not wholly satisfied with the result of his persuasions, was still busy with secret warnings. Courtenay, on his advice, was once more lodged in the Tower, but he pointed out there was still at large one far nearer to the throne by right of blood than the Yorkist claimant, nearer even than Lady Jane, a woman whose very existence was a menace to her sister's plans. Had not Elizabeth's name been mentioned along with that of the Earl of Devon by Wyatt and his fellow plotters? What was more probable than that these two

had instigated the revolt in the hope of preventing the Spanish match, and thus of hindering the return of England to the true fold?

Even at the very beginning of her reign Mary would have found it difficult to resist such insinuations. The jealousy she had felt of her child rival at Hatfield had taken deep root, while their later friendship was but a surface growth. Nothing could blot from the elder sister's memory the thought that Elizabeth was the daughter of the woman who had driven her own mother into disgrace and exile. Very soon after her accession her manner towards Elizabeth had begun to cool, and she would make her give precedence on public occasions to their cousin, the Countess of Lennox, a Catholic and the daughter of Margaret Tudor, King Henry's sister.

The French ambassador, writing home, made a note of this growing coolness, and also that Elizabeth did not seem aware of the danger into which it might bring her. " The Princess is so little dismayed . . . that every day she has all the young gentlemen of the Court to visit her and takes pains to talk with them." A year later, when Wyatt's rebellion broke out, she was to pay dearly for a popularity thus partly of her own making though still more of circumstances beyond her control.

At this time, in her early twenties, she was undoubtedly handsome, with dark sparkling eyes, an olive-tinted complexion and masses of reddish hair; a contrast in every way to Mary, feeble and unhealthy, her sallow face worn by anxiety and grief. Well Mary knew, through her spies, that, in spite of talk of her marriage, she was already regarded by her subjects as an old woman, whose natural heir and the hope of England was this same good-looking younger sister. The average Englishman cared not a whit that according to papal decrees Anne Boleyn's daughter had no right to the throne. King Harry had named her one of his heirs in his will, and that was a document far more sacred to many of his countrymen than any foreign decree, whether given at Rome or Geneva. It was also placed to her credit that she was wholly English, not half Castilian, and much of her popularity amongst people who had never seen her rested on that fact alone.

So long as she kept within the letter of the law, Elizabeth's popularity made her safe; but Mary believed that if she could be proved a traitor by her own words or deeds, not even her most ardent supporters, remembering the failure of the last rebellion, would dare to try and save her from royal justice. Immediately, then, after Wyatt's defeat the Princess, who was living just outside London at Ashridge, received orders to

come at once to Court, there to answer an accusation of having played a secret part in the late troubles. In vain she sent word that she was too ill to travel. Although the Queen's own doctors reported that this was the truth, the command was repeated, and Elizabeth, borne on a litter, conveyed under guard to Westminster where she was kept for some weeks a prisoner in the Palace, seeing no one save the officials sent by her sister to ask her questions.

As she had passed through the streets of London Elizabeth had flung back the curtains of her litter, and the citizens remarked on her extreme pallor and the haughtiness of her expression. From the first she denied any understanding with either Wyatt or Courtenay, and, though she begged for a personal interview with the Queen, she made it clear that her object was not to seek pardon for any disloyalty, but to clear her name of a disgraceful charge. Mary, however, was fully convinced of her guilt and steadily refused the audience.

At last, on Palm Sunday, when the majority of Londoners were in church, the Princess was informed that a guard was waiting to conduct her to the Tower, and that since it was necessary she should go by boat with the tide, she must make no delay. "The Lord's will be done!" she answered, "I am content seeing it is the

Queen's pleasure." They were brave words, but in Elizabeth's heart was the revolt of despair as she recalled the number of those, like her of royal blood, who, entering the grim gateways of London's fortress in the past had never tasted again the freedom of the world outside.

Even the journey itself, as it happened, was to prove perilous; for London Bridge in Tudor times acted like a dam across the river, the piles of its low thick arches, some of them encumbered with mill wheels, holding up the water that raced through the openings left at terrific speed. So great was the fall of water on this occasion, when the barge with its royal prisoner drew near the bridge, that the boatmen at first declined to attempt the passage. Urged on by the guard they at last consented, and, striking one of the piles with the bow of the barge, narrowly missed turning turtle in the rapids.

To Elizabeth their escape seemed the mere postponement of her fate as the iron bars of the "Traitor's Gate" loomed up before her. In vain she declared she would not land, could not in fact because of the water that washed over the steps against which the barge was moored. "Madam, you cannot choose but obey the Queen's orders," insisted the officer in charge, and would have placed his cloak round her shoulders since it was raining, but that, furious

at the realization of her helplessness, she dashed it from his hand.

" Here lands as true a subject, being prisoner, as ever landed on these stairs," she exclaimed, yielding at last to persuasion, but paused again outside the building itself and, though the rain was beating down on her, seated herself on a stone, staring before her.

" Madam, you had best come in out of the rain, for you sit unwholesomely," ventured the lieutenant of the Tower, and, turning to him in profound despair she answered, " Better sit here than in a worse place, for God knoweth, not I, whither you will bring me." Her words made one of her attendants weep, and noticing this Elizabeth recovered her own courage, and, rising, passed within her prison doors. Here for two months she lay in constant danger of her life, cut off from all her friends, deprived, when it was noticed, even of the daily gift of flowers offered to her by a small son of her gaoler.

" Much suspected of me
Nothing proved can be
Quoth Elizabeth prisoner."

These words are supposed to have been cut by Elizabeth with a diamond on a window in the palace of Woodstock, where she was later sent under strict guard. They might fittingly be

taken as the motto of her earlier imprisonment in the Tower.

For weeks she was daily questioned and cross-questioned, not merely as to her possible dealings with Wyatt, but as to her religious beliefs of which the Queen held grave doubts. Like the majority of courtiers who transferred their allegiance from Protestant Edward to Catholic Mary, Elizabeth, though she did not desire the changes in religion made by her sister, had outwardly conformed. She had even attended Mass, but Mary did not altogether believe in the sincerity of such a sudden conversion, and now sent priests to examine her as to her real views on this service. In answer she received the following lines, baffling in their very simplicity:

> " Christ was the Word that spake it.
> He took the bread and break it,
> And what His word doth make it,
> That I believe and take it."

The Princess Elizabeth was not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, such as Bishop Latimer and other leading reformers of the last reign, by that time in prison for conscience' sake. She did not indeed share many of their opinions, being more Catholic than Protestant in her sympathies; but as the child of Anne Boleyn she disliked as profoundly as any English follower of

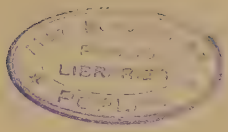
Calvin the idea of reunion with the Roman Church that had condemned her mother.

In prison all her energies were spent in baffling those who sought to pin her down to some confession of treason or heresy that might enable Mary without self-reproach to harden her heart against her. It was a continuous battle of wits, and on the May morning when the summons at length came to leave her prison, Elizabeth believed that she had been defeated, and must pay the price on Tower Hill. In reality she had won, and the final verdict, "nothing proved can be," had decided the Queen's conscience in favour of mercy.

A prisoner still, though with guns thundering the Londoners' joy at her release, she passed down the Thames to a time of further captivity at Woodstock, and here, though closely guarded and with spies ever about her path, news from the Court must occasionally have reached her with gossip about the preparations for her sister's marriage.

"Whatever happens," Mary had told the imperial ambassador, "I am the wife of the Prince of Spain:[1] crown, rank, life, all shall go before I will take any other husband," and Tudor obstinacy beat down the opposition of her sub-

[1] It was not until 1556 that the Emperor Charles V resigned the crown of Spain to his son Philip.



PHILIP II

(*From an engraving after Titian*)

jects though, like true Englishmen, they continue to grumble and growl.

For nothing did Philip learn to lisp English sentences, and, disguising as best he could his natural stiff haughtiness of manner, acknowledge the greetings of the crowd by lifting his hat with unwonted condescension. He came unwillingly to the altar, a sacrifice to his need of securing England as an ally; and, loathing his bride, the barbarian race of which she was Queen, and their still more uncivilized climate, counted the days until he could invent sufficient excuse for his recall to the Continent. In return the English populace, though outwardly polite to the bridegroom, showed no such consideration towards his retinue. Apprentices and boys snowballed his attendants in the streets of London, while housewives had almost to be compelled by force to give them lodgings.

Mary deliberately shut her eyes to the true state of affairs. She had determined to fall in love with her Spanish champion of the Faith, and would see nothing in his cold calculating nature but the virtues of which his ambassadors had glibly told her. For a time she was happy, happy indeed beyond all her expectations on that day, towards the end of the year 1554, when, in response to a petition by Parliament, the Pope sent his legate, an Englishman, Cardinal Pole,

to pardon the land its past heresies, and reconcile it formally to the Church she adored. Henceforward she believed that Heaven had set her the task of making this union a reality, even if she must sacrifice the lives of numberless heretics in order to save their souls, and still more prevent the errors they taught from spreading amongst the populace.

Philip, in no mind to exasperate the nation he wished to use as a tool, urged caution and a policy of mercy, but in vain. Mary, in her joy at the accomplishment of the two objects of her life, had become a fanatic. Thus the rest of her reign is mainly occupied with that dark page in English history we call the "Marian persecutions," when all that was best in the reforming movement perished in the flames of Smithfield or on village greens rather than deny its faith, and by this constancy raised up a troop of witnesses a hundred-fold in strength and influence.

It may be truly said that the Reformation on its religious side sank few deep roots in English soil until, during Mary's reign, it was watered by the blood of martyrs. At Oxford old Hugh Latimer, although he was nearly eighty, was condemned to be burned alive. "Play the man, Master Ridley," he cried to his fellow bishop as they were chained to the stake and the logs

piled round them. " We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out."

The words were a prophecy amply fulfilled; for men and women who had hitherto cared little about doctrines, whether Protestant or Catholic, were moved at last when they saw such sufferings patiently endured. " God save thee! God strengthen thee and help thee!" rose cries of sympathy from the watching crowds instead of the jeers or exclamations of terror for which Mary had hoped. " Within these twelve months," wrote a reformer to Bonner, Bishop of London, who was responsible for one hundred and twenty-eight martyrdoms within his diocese alone, " you have lost the hearts of twenty thousand that before were rank papists," and the day came when Bonner and his fellow-judges would gladly have stayed their hand, had not the Queen urged them to redouble their zeal.

Mary's fleeting happiness had by now long since vanished, for though she still loved her husband she had guessed something of his true nature and the cold dislike with which he regarded her. On the plea of political needs he had left her in the autumn of 1555, and when he returned for a brief visit, made it clear that his one object was to secure English help in the war on which he had embarked with France, and then

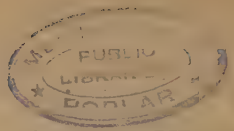
to return to his own kingdom. Other cherished hopes were also disappointed. She had believed she would have a child whose birth would not only strengthen her hold on the throne, but also the fragile chain that linked her kingdom to Rome. Again she was disillusioned, and at last saw herself as she really was, an old woman dying of an incurable disease, her subjects praying for her end, while courtiers left her antechambers deserted in order to pay secret homage to the rising star, her rival now as always, the Princess Elizabeth.

Thanks to the intercession of Philip, who had made it his policy on his arrival to keep on good terms with his sister-in-law, Elizabeth had been released from Woodstock. She had even on occasions appeared at Court, but for the most part lived quietly in the country, maintaining once more at Hatfield some semblance of the state that befitted her rank. " She keeps down her household not to waken the Queen's jealousy," we read, but lack of outward show was no measure of her importance at this time, and Mary knew it. " There is no lord nor knight in the kingdom who would not enter her service," it was said of Elizabeth. " Such is the affection and love that is felt towards her."

Across the sea Englishmen were refusing to fight for Mary because they felt truly enough

that they had been dragged into a war with France merely to please her Spanish husband. As she lay dying news was brought to her that Calais, insufficiently guarded, had fallen into the enemy's hands. We see the loss now in its true light as the inevitable climax of a struggle between races; but that France must belong wholly to the French was an idea beyond the grasp of the average Tudor Englishman. To him the defeat spelt nothing but shame, and Mary herself, discovering English blood in her veins at last, was moved as by no other political event. " Open my heart and you will find Calais written there," she said to her attendants; and though she lingered on for some months, the ill news came really as a death-blow.

Early on the morning of 17th November 1558 she died; and already by eight o'clock of that same day Parliament was offering " praise to Almighty God for that He hath left unto us a true, lawful, and right inheritress to the crown of this realm which is the lady Elizabeth . . . of whose most lawful right and title in the succession of the crown, thanks be to God, we need not doubt."



Chapter VI

THE FIRST YEARS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH'S REIGN

ELIZABETH was at Hatfield when the news of Mary's death reached her. "This is the Lord's doing," she exclaimed, falling on her knees, "and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Marvellous indeed it was for one so lately in danger of her life, never sure of a friend and unable to reveal heart or mind for fear of a lurking enemy, to realize that she was henceforth free and powerful, the Queen of a Court whose members were prepared to accept as law her every word or whim.

Such change of fortune might well turn the head of Anne Boleyn's daughter, inheriting the vanity and restless love of admiration and amusement that had helped to bring about her mother's fall. Fully conscious of her good looks and the beautiful hands with which she loved to make display, Elizabeth at twenty-five was as frankly greedy of flattery as a small child of sweets.

No suitor for her hand, and Mary's death let loose a floodgate of proposals from all parts of the Continent, could hope to find favour whose

ambassador was not skilled in paying compliments and painting the love-sick condition of his master induced by the mere sight of Elizabeth's portrait. " There are ten or twelve ambassadors of us," wrote Philip's envoy, " all competing for her Majesty's hand: and they say the Duke of Holstein is coming next as suitor for the King of Denmark. The Duke of Finland who is here for his brother the King of Sweden threatens to kill the Emperor's man: and the Queen fears they will cut each other's throats in her presence."

Elizabeth in reality thoroughly enjoyed a situation so gratifying to her vanity, but it disgusted de Feria, the Spanish ambassador, who found he no longer received trustworthy royal confidences as during the last reign. " Every day," he complains, " there is a new cry raised about a husband. . . . For my part I believe she will never make up her mind to anything that is good for her."

Sometimes she would confess to him that she had no intention of marrying at all. " She pretends to me she would like to be a nun and live in a cell and tell her beads from morning till night," at which point, since it was a secret dispatch and he could show his feelings, de Feria adds, " this woman is possessed of a hundred thousand devils." On another occasion she would protest that she was very much in

love, and that she could think of none but the Archduke Charles among her suitors, gazing long and fondly on his portrait that she ordered to be hung at the foot of her bed. Was he tall or short? fat or lean? Such questions were interspersed with assurances that " she would die a thousand deaths rather than marry one of her own subjects "; yet all the while she would flirt so outrageously with the eligible nobles of her Court that the nation at any rate became firmly convinced that one or other young gallant must be destined for her husband. " They are betting four to one in London that he will be King," was said of that " handsome gentleman," Sir William Pickering, while others thought it would be the Earl of Arundel, at this time chief peer of the realm.

The Queen's own favourite from the moment of her accession was Robert Dudley, son of that Duke of Northumberland who had plotted Lady Jane Grey's rebellion at the beginning of the last reign. When she was in a temper Elizabeth was heard to say that he came of a stock that had been traitors for three generations, but ordinarily she only remembered that her " sweet Robin " had suffered imprisonment in the Tower at the same time as herself, and so made him Master of the Horse, and later Earl of Leicester. " I show him favour," she declared, " because of his goodness

to me when I was in trouble during the reign of my sister. At that time he . . . even sold his possessions to provide me with funds."

Apart from any feelings of gratitude she found Leicester's suave, rather artificial, manner very congenial to her own taste. He was a " goodly person " we are told, and no one knew better how to show off his charms to advantage against just the right background of florid magnificence admired by his Queen. In his novel, *Kenilworth*, Sir Walter Scott has left us a picture of the elaborate entertainment provided by the favourite for his royal mistress when she came to visit him at his country house, and how he rode at her right hand " like a golden image with jewels and cloth of gold." If he was only officially Master of the Horse, Robert Dudley was for many years master also of all the chief ceremonies at Court, and such an important person there that, if he had not been already married, it was widely believed he would have become master of the Queen's throne and of England as well.

" The worst young fellow I ever encountered," was the Spanish ambassador's verdict; and numbers of Englishmen were of the same opinion, and did not hesitate to predict that the favourite would make an end of his wife, whom he kept in the country, in order to open up the road for his ambitions.

In the meantime at the Court of Westminster suitors came and went, and no one, not even William Cecil, the Secretary of State, was any nearer discovering what Elizabeth's intentions were with regard to her marriage, or indeed whether she had any. " Here," he notes, " is a great resort of woers and controversy among lovers. Would to God the Queen had one and the rest honourably satisfied."

Elizabeth's nature showed other more pleasing traits than this insatiable thirst for admiration. When the question of her marriage was raised by her first Parliament, she answered, in words that have a very different ring to her sentimental utterances to foreign ambassadors, that it was her intention to devote herself to the good of her people. " As for me," she ended her address, " it shall be sufficient that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen having lived and reigned so many years died a virgin." Her constant emphasis on the love she bore her subjects is the clue to all that was best and truest in Elizabeth's character.

When the Spanish ambassador tried to claim that her peaceful accession to the throne was entirely due to his master's efforts on her behalf, she replied sharply that she owed everything to her people alone; and though de Feria wrote home maliciously that she had " no friends, no

council, no finances, no nobleman of conduct, no captains, no soldiers, and no reputation in the world," he was soon driven to admit that a sovereign so popular might prove a dangerous enemy.

" If ever any person," we are told, " had either the gift or the style to win the hearts of the people, it was the Queen: and if ever she did express the same it was . . . in coupling mildness with majesty . . . and in stately stooping to the meanest sort. . . . Her eye was set on one; her ear listened to another; her judgement ran upon a third; to a fourth she addressed her speech; her spirit seemed to be everywhere and yet so entire in herself as it seemed to be nowhere else. . . ."

King Harry had possessed just this royal gift of winning hearts and Elizabeth was as much his daughter in character as the child of Anne Boleyn.

Entering the City for the first time after her accession, on her way to take up her residence in the Tower, she was received, according to an officer who accompanied her, " with prayers, welcomings, cries and tender words, and all signs which argue an earnest love of subjects towards their sovereign; and the Queen, by holding up her hands and glad countenance to such as stood afar off, and most tender language

to those that stood nigh to her Grace, showed herself no less thankful to receive the people's goodwill than they to offer it. To all that wished her well she gave thanks. To such as bade " God save her Grace," she said in return, " God save you all," and added that she thanked them with all her heart. As she passed through the Temple Bar she said as a farewell to the populace: " Be ye well assured I will stand your good Queen."

Fickle and untruthful as Elizabeth often showed herself, this was a promise she never broke, and to its fulfilment she brought that shrewd common sense and instinct for government that nearly all the Tudors possessed.

" King Harry knew a man when he saw him," had been a popular boast of his day: and so, for all her coquetting with foppish young courtiers, did " Good Queen Bess."

The famous ministers of her reign were not the heroes of the ball-room or the hunting-field, but hard-working business men who proved their worth in the Council Chamber or on delicate missions to foreign courts.

It was to the " rather meanly statured," soberly clad William Cecil, Lord Burghley, whose only exercise, we are told, was riding round his garden paths on a mule, that Elizabeth looked, even before her accession, for advice and support.

" This judgement I have of you," she told him when she made him her Secretary of State, " that you will not be corrupted by any manner of gifts and that you will be faithful to the State; and that, without any respect of private will, you will give me the counsel you think best."

In the years that followed Elizabeth would often browbeat her secretary when in one of her rages, denouncing him as " knave " or " fool " for offering advice that did not please her; and Burghley, on these occasions, would bow his head to the storm, pretending to yield his opinion. A few days later the two would be working together again quite happily, and the secretary's wiser judgement might be found to have prevailed. When the Spanish ambassador declared that the new Queen had " no friends, no council," he left out of his reckoning men like Lord Burghley and that other shrewd statesman, her private secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham, of whom it was said he was " dexterous in finding a secret, close in keeping it. . . . He saw everyman and none saw him."

For the rest, de Feria's account of England's weakness at the time of Mary's death was confirmed by reports of the Council itself. " The Queen poor; the realm exhausted; the nobility poor and decayed; good captains and soldiers wanting; the people out of order; justice not

executed; all things dear . . . division among ourselves; war with France."

The most serious of these troubles came under the heading " division among ourselves." Misgovernment and religious persecution had bred a spirit of discontent and intolerance in England hard to allay. Where in old days ordinary folk had left the discussion of religious opinions to churchmen and the learned, now at the cross-roads or in every ale-house men and women would uphold and argue the views of the Pope, Luther, or Calvin with bitter intensity. While the North of England, especially the noble families of the Border counties and their tenants, remained Catholic in sympathy, the South, where most of the martyrdoms of the last reign had taken place, was fiercely Protestant, some of the extreme reformers clamouring for revenge on papists for the fires of Smithfield.

It was therefore a matter of profound importance, not only to a divided England, but also to Europe with its hostile religious camps, what attitude Elizabeth decided to take up on ecclesiastical matters. King Philip flattered himself at first that, in her need for his support, the new Queen would be forced to maintain at least the outward observance of the Old Faith. Calvinists, on the other hand, who had taken refuge in Geneva from Mary's fanaticism,

believed that the accession of Anne Boleyn's daughter could only mean that their hour of triumph had dawned at last. Both were doomed to disappointment.

Elizabeth, whose claim to the throne by right of birth had been condemned by papal decree, had no desire or intention of continuing the connection with Rome. She did not even trouble to inform the Pope that she had become Queen. In 1559 Parliament passed two Acts dealing with ecclesiastical matters, the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. The first of these, the Act of Supremacy, insisted, in much the same words as Henry VIII's previous Act of 1534, on the authority of the English sovereign over the Church, though to please her bishops Elizabeth altered the title " Supreme Head " to " Supreme Governor."

The Act of Uniformity laid down a form of common worship for the whole kingdom, and anyone who wished to hold any public office, whether in Church or State, had to take an oath to accept this form of service, as well as to acknowledge the Queen as " Supreme Governor." The form of common worship itself laid down by the Act is very interesting, not only because it stamped the Church of England with a character different from that of all the other reformed churches of Europe, but

because we can recognize in it the Queen's own outlook on religious questions and her love of compromise.

To please reformers she granted the use of the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI's reign, which had been drawn up under the influence of the Calvinists; but the petition against "the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities" was left out. In the Communion Service a clause was inserted that allowed worshippers either to regard it as a mere commemoration of the Last Supper or to read into it, if they chose, the doctrine of the Mass.

These alterations were the work of Elizabeth herself, and did not meet with the approval of Cecil, who was a whole-hearted Protestant, nor did they satisfy Mary's Catholic bishops, most of whom resigned rather than take the oath demanded of them by the Act of Supremacy. The majority of the lesser clergy took the oaths, however, and, since Cardinal Pole, the Pope's legate who had been Archbishop of Canterbury in the last reign, had conveniently died within a few hours of Mary herself, the Queen was able to replace him by a man of moderate views, Mathew Parker, Dean of Lincoln. Together, Queen and Archbishop guided the Church along the *via media*, or middle road, laid down for it, with so much success that it has been said

" the government, worship, and doctrine of the Established Church are the most abiding marks left by Elizabeth on the national life of England."

Little was this result expected at the time. Reformers comforted themselves that the settlement was only a first step in the Protestant direction: de Feria predicted with gloomy satisfaction that since " the Catholics are two-thirds of the realm," Elizabeth was " on the high road to lose her throne." He even ventured, when reproaching her for the lack of gratitude she had shown his master, to hint he would not be sorry if this were to happen. The Queen could afford to smile at the outburst of temper, for she knew enough of her brother-in-law, King Philip, to reckon his generosity at its true worth.

In their duel for the domination of the world, those two great Powers, France and Spain, counted every ally they secured or lost in the nature of a rapier thrust given or received. The ports of England commanded the Channel, and thus, even though sunk in debt and with an army and navy completely disorganized, her help was not to be despised. To gain control of her resources, King Philip had bartered himself once already in the matrimonial market; and now in 1559, in order to retain them, he offered himself as a fresh sacrifice, declaring that although he knew it would injure his reputation as " Catholic

King," he was yet prepared to wed with the heretic Elizabeth.

He evidently believed that this was a most magnanimous offer, and told his ambassador that, of course, in return, he would expect his bride-to-be to agree to certain conditions, such as asking the Pope for a dispensation for her marriage with a brother-in-law and promising that she would henceforth live as a Catholic. " In this way," he concluded, " it will be evident and manifest that I am serving the Lord in marrying her, and that she has been converted by my act."

Elizabeth for a time appeared to be gratified by the advances of this new and important suitor, but de Feria was well aware from the first, and warned his master, that she would never seriously consider him as a husband, dared not, in fact, on account of Philip's unpopularity in England. " They are all very glad to be free of your Majesty," he wrote back frankly. " The people are wagging their tongues a good deal about the late Queen having sent great sums of money to your Majesty . . . they say it is through your Majesty the country is in such want and that Calais was lost."

This last was the chief accusation brought against Mary's foreign husband: that he had dragged England into a war with France not of her own choosing or at her own time, and so

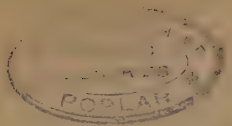
caused the loss of her last possession across the Channel. Elizabeth, succeeding to the throne and sharing the general indignation at this disaster, took prompt measures as soon as she could that at least no more English gold should be spent on purely Spanish interests. In April 1559 she signed the Treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis with France, whose King promised to pay her half a million crowns if he had not restored Calais within eight years.

At the same time the Kings of France and Spain also came to terms; and soon afterwards Philip agreed to marry a French princess much to Elizabeth's assumed pique at his desertion. " She said your Majesty could not have been so very much in love with her, or you would have waited three of four months," wrote de Feria; and gave it as his private opinion the Queen and her Council were alarmed by the Spanish-French alliance.

The menace, if they chose to combine against England, was obvious; but Elizabeth, who had already begun to free her kingdom from some of the worst results of Mary's bad government, prepared to meet it calmly. By a strict economy, that recalls the efforts of her grandfather, Henry VII, " paying nothing and giving nothing to her people and spending very little," she rapidly reduced the enormous national debt that

was owing to foreign creditors. In 1560 she called in the old base coinage, that had been so mixed with alloy, mutilated, and clipped since the days of Henry VIII as to be worth but a fraction of its face value, and issued a new and sound coinage in its place.

Such measures were the necessary foundation of any strong government; and they gained for Elizabeth a greater reputation abroad than her sister had enjoyed in years past as the result of her alliance with Spain. They also increased the good understanding that the new Queen had established with her people at the outset of her reign. Fresh political storms were gathering round her; but thanks to the steps she had taken, and her wise advisers, she was able when they broke to withstand their violence.



Chapter VII

THE RIVAL QUEENS

THE Spanish ambassador had declared that by neglecting the help and advice of King Philip, Elizabeth had placed herself in a position of great danger. "You know the defenceless state of the kingdom," he reminded his master in 1559, "and the temptation presented to the King of France by the extreme facility of the conquest?" and then, alluding to the religious settlement just concluded that would, he thought, arouse the indignation of all Catholic Europe, he continued with this prophecy: "The King of France will appeal to the Pope; the Pope will excommunicate the Queen, declare her illegitimate, and pronounce in favour of the Dauphiness. . . . The French will enter England in the name of the Holy Church."

Now it is with Mary, Dauphiness of France, and her claim to the English throne that this chapter will deal, and to understand it we must go back to the reign of Henry VII and the marriage of his eldest daughter, Margaret, with King James IV of Scotland.

English rivalry with Scotland was of very long

standing, almost as deep and embittered as the hereditary feud with France to which it was so often closely allied, for the French came to regard the northern kingdom as a convenient "back-door" into England. Attacking their hated enemy in front by way of the Channel, they found it also possible by means of this back-door to harass them from the rear; while in the same way, if the Scotch were at war with their southern neighbour, they would appeal to France to divert English attention by a raid on the Isle of Wight or the Cinque Ports.

Kings of England sought to separate these allies by forming an English party among the Scotch nobles that would work for peace on both sides of the Border; while at frequent intervals they would arrange royal marriages in order to draw the two reigning families into a closer relationship. Thus it was that Henry VII gave his daughter Margaret to James IV of Scotland; and when in 1542 their son and heir, James V, died, leaving only an infant daughter, Mary Stuart, to succeed him, Henry VIII at once urged that the little Queen should be married to his own son, Edward Prince of Wales. In this way he hoped that after his death the two kingdoms would be peacefully united, and that the old troubles arising from Border raids would come to an end.

The suggested marriage was, however, very unpopular north of the Border, save with the English party at the Scotch Court, largely bought with Tudor gold and therefore distrusted by the rest of the nation. It would mean that their little Queen Mary would be taken away to live in England, and those who surrounded her declared that this was merely a first step towards Scotland being governed from London instead of from Edinburgh.

When, after Henry VIII's death, the Duke of Somerset continued to press the young King's suit, he found he could make so little headway by peaceful means, that he determined to try force. In 1547 he invaded Scotland, hoping to gain possession of the little Queen, and succeeded in winning the battle of Pinkie; but this only made England more unpopular than ever, and the Scotch less willing to do what Somerset wished.

The Queen-mother, Mary of Guise, was a Frenchwoman, and hated the English; and now she seized the opportunity to urge that her daughter should be married to a French Prince who, true to old traditions, would help her when they grew up to maintain Scotland's independence. At such a moment the suggestion was welcomed on all sides; and while the English army still threatened Edinburgh, Mary Stuart,

then only six years old, was hurried secretly to the West Coast and from there carried down the Clyde and across the sea to be betrothed to her cousin, the Dauphin Francis of Valois, a boy of four, and the heir to the French throne.

In such surroundings the girl Queen, half French by birth, grew up wholly French in her sympathies and outlook, a training that was to prove as fatal a handicap in her career as Mary Tudor had found her extravagant love of Spain. Scotland, unlike her Queen, remained fiercely and intolerantly national. The gratitude she had at first felt towards her French ally for helping her reject the Duke of Somerset's demands quickly changed to jealousy and dislike as she realized that her independence was now threatened from a new quarter. Mary of Guise, acting as regent for her daughter, could not conceal her preference for her own countrymen. Thus she angered the Scotch nobles by bestowing the chief offices of state on Frenchmen, and the middle and lower classes by her persecution of the Protestants in order to please her brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine.

The Reformation started in England at the Court, and only, as it gradually spread, roused the nation as a whole to take an interest in questions of doctrine. Exactly the opposite happened in Scotland. Here the views of Calvin

came through the preaching of men of humble birth such as the famous John Knox of Haddington, " the Reformer of a Kingdom "; and before the Court was almost aware of their existence they had taken possession of the heart and brain of the larger part of the nation.

Persecution proved vain to stem so swift a flood. Knox himself, after he had been condemned to the French galleys, and apparently silenced, reappeared in Scotland at Elizabeth's accession to the English throne. In a short while he was more powerful than he had ever been before, more powerful than anyone else in the kingdom, because of his rough eloquence that, when he spoke from his pulpit to the crowds of Edinburgh, was able to rouse them almost to a pitch of madness. Quite fearless himself, and so certain of the complete righteousness of his cause that he could seldom find a trace of holiness in any beliefs that differed from his own, Knox was determined to free his country at whatever cost from the Roman faith that he preached was the teaching of Anti-Christ.

During his exile from Scotland, after his release from the galleys, he had been for a time tutor to Edward VI; and later, when the Marian persecution began, had fled to Geneva, where indignation led him to publish his famous book, *The Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous*

Regiment of Women. No woman was fit to govern a kingdom, he maintained; denouncing Mary Tudor and Mary of Guise in terms of violent abuse and contempt that included women in general. Afterwards, when Elizabeth succeeded Mary on the throne of England, and he lived in the hope of a Protestant restoration there, he came to regret much of what he had said, and even attempted a kind of apology. Elizabeth was far too clever, however, to be soothed by a suggestion that like Deborah she was exceptional amongst her sex. She cordially disliked the Scottish preacher for his lack of manners, and had no sympathy with his extreme views, nor yet with the Protestant nobles of Scotland who, in 1557, had bound themselves by oath, under the title " Lords of the Congregation," to drive the French out of their land and make Calvinism the state religion.

When the " Lords of the Congregation " learned that the regent, Mary of Guise, had written secretly to her Catholic relations in France, asking for reinforcements with which to compel them to give up this programme and submit to her government, they appealed to England for help. Elizabeth hesitated long before, yielding to Cecil's advice, she at last proffered a very half-hearted assistance. All her life she held strong views about the right of Kings

and Queens to demand absolute obedience from their subjects. At the moment, the forlorn position of England threatened by a possible joint French and Spanish invasion, compelled her to accept Scotch rebels as her allies, but it could not make her approve of their conduct nor fail to rouse the fear that her own Catholic subjects in the North would be led by such a bad example to rebel against her when next an opportunity occurred.

There were also other objections. The campaign would cost a great deal of money, and Elizabeth was by nature niggardly and resented having to provide her allies with arms and ammunition out of the gold she had just begun to hoard in her treasury. Then, again, by the terms of the Treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis she was nominally at peace with the French King, so that at first sight to assist the " Lords of the Congregation " overthrow the garrison he had established in Scotland must appear an act of treachery on her part. Only at first sight, however, for Elizabeth had good reason to believe from the reports of her spies and Spanish warnings, that these terms had been granted by her enemy merely to afford him a breathing-space in which he could work out fresh plots against her.

Henry II of France, a Catholic, made little secret of his conviction that Anne Boleyn's child

could have no right whatever to the throne of England. This, he considered, should have passed by law, regardless of Henry VIII's will, to his own daughter-in-law, the Dauphiness. Mary Stuart was thus brought up at the French Court in the belief that she, and not her cousin Elizabeth, should reign at Westminster. When in 1559 Henry II died and was succeeded by her young husband, Francis II, she at once assumed the title " Queen of England " in addition to those of France and Scotland.

" Bestriding the realm, one foot in Calais the other in Scotland," the new French King, or rather, since he was still a boy, his advisers, the brothers of Mary of Guise, plotted to attack Elizabeth in a campaign on such a large scale and with so much parade of devotion to the Catholic Faith that it would appear to the rest of Europe in the nature of a crusade against a heretic usurper. Unfortunately for these plans, they delayed in the meantime to send the regent of Scotland the troops for which she had asked at once. Thus the " Lords of the Congregation," supported by Elizabeth, though reluctantly, with men and money, besieged the small French garrison that had taken refuge in Leith and compelled it to surrender.

By the Treaty of Edinburgh that Elizabeth signed in 1560 with her allies, she gained what

she had sought, namely, the promise that all French troops should be withdrawn from Scotland, as well as the recognition of her claim to be lawful Queen of England. " England once more stood before Europe as an independent Power, able to take care of itself and its friends, and annoy its enemies." Indeed, de Feria's gloomy prophecies had proved false, and Cecil's policy of attacking the French in Scotland led to the peace Elizabeth so much desired; though events were to show that her rivalry with Mary Stuart had only closed one chapter to enter on another.

In November 1560 Francis II, always frail and unhealthy, died; and after being Queen of France for only eighteen months, Mary Stuart, who had learned to look on the land of her adoption far more as home than her cold northern kingdom, found no longer any place there for herself or her ambitions. She had always been disliked by her mother-in-law, Catharine de Medicis, now regent for her son, the new boy King, Charles IX; and Catharine took pains to hint that the young widow's obvious duty was to return to Scotland as speedily as possible.

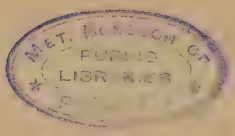
Yet Scotland was scarcely a cheering prospect for the girl of eighteen, since her own mother, Mary of Guise, worn out by the failure of her struggle with the rebel lords, and after con-

fessing bitterly "the people used to love me while now they wish I were dead," had lately died of grief in Edinburgh Castle. But Mary Stuart never lacked courage nor that buoyant love of adventure that made her able to turn her back on the past. "She desires much to hear of hardiness and valiancy," it was said of her; and this was no mere pretence, but the boast of one who later "repented nothing but . . . that she was not a man to know what life it was to lie all night in the fields or to walk upon the causeway with . . . a buckler and broadsword."

Inheriting this spirit from her wild Scotch ancestors, the young Queen soon made up her mind that to be ruler of even a half-savage realm was better than to be snubbed at the French Court by Catharine de Medicis. In August 1561 she said farewell to France, and set sail for her northern kingdom, arriving at the port of Leith early on a morning dank with sea mist before she was expected by her subjects and, therefore, without preparations having been made for her reception. The journey overseas had been rough and dangerous, no one at Leith seemed particularly glad to see her safe, and Mary, accustomed to the ceremony and splendour of the French Court, wept with disappointment at the sight of the miserable horses collected to mount herself and her ladies. This mood of weakness

MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

(*After a painting by Janet at Hampton Court*)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quickly passed, for she had made up her mind to find everything for the best in her new home, and when she reached Edinburgh not even the harsh psalm-singing under her windows at night that spoilt her sleep could damp her enthusiasm, once she understood it was intended as a people's welcome.

Determined to remain loyal herself to the Roman Church in which she had been brought up, Mary was quite certain that by tact and toleration she would be able to win the hearts of the " Lords of the Congregation," perhaps of the dour John Knox himself. As clever as Elizabeth, she surpassed her still good-looking rival not merely in youth and actual beauty, but in that " enchantment whereby men are bewitched "; so that the majority of the Scotch nobles became for the time at least her devoted slaves.

" The honey-pot," John Knox nicknamed her sourly. He had found all his eloquence unavailing to convince her of the error of her religious views; still worse, he must stand by and watch his followers desert him on Sunday in order to guard her chapel door while she heard Mass in safety. " If there be not in her a proud mind," he prophesied, " a crafty wit and an obdurate heart against God and His truth, my judgement faileth me." Mary had not succeeded in charming John Knox, but she could afford, it

seemed, to laugh at him and his pulpit thunder. Even the people of Edinburgh, accustomed to listen to his sermons and ready, though they were, to stone her foreign priests and make public mockery of all she held most sacred in her faith, did not conceal that they admired her. They " thought themselves extremely happy to have such a Queen who was the most celebrated beauty of her age." The Court also was thronged with eligible suitors or their ambassadors, some of them Princes weary of waiting on the Queen of England's whims, much to that lady's indignation.

The Treaty of Edinburgh would seem at first sight to have removed all grounds of quarrel between the cousins; but this document Mary, when the " Lords of the Congregation " presented it for her signature, refused to ratify. She was unwilling in truth to part so lightly with her claim to the English throne, though the envoys she sent to explain her refusal hinted that she might be persuaded to sign at some future date, were Elizabeth on her part ready to acknowledge her as her heir. To this the English Queen replied tartly that " she was not so foolish as to hang a winding-sheet before her eyes or make a funeral feast while she was yet alive."

Elizabeth, with considerable cause, suspected her rival of being far more interested in schemes

to secure the English throne at once than in any distant succession question. Outwardly they were friends, and exchanged frequent letters and presents of jewellery. The English Queen, in one of her sentimental moods, would even profess to feel the love of a mother or an elder sister for her beautiful girl-cousin, and would offer her confidential advice on the subject of choosing husbands; but behind lay a deep-rooted jealousy that at times she found it difficult to conceal.

Melville, the Scotch Ambassador at the English Court, was once embarrassed by Elizabeth's frank question, which was the more beautiful, she or Mary? He replied discreetly that " they were both the fairest ladies in their countries," admitting, however, that his own Queen was the taller. " Then she is too high," snapped Elizabeth, " for I am neither too high nor too low."

" Was the Queen of Scotland a good musician? " To this Melville answered with more caution than gallantry that " she played reasonably for a Queen "; though later, hearing Elizabeth play on the virginals, he allowed that she was the better performer. The real rivalry, however, was not one of looks or talents, but of diplomacy.

Mary, like Elizabeth, did not wish to marry a continental suitor such as Eric of Sweden or

the Archduke Charles. From the moment she returned to Scotland she had determined to gain the English crown, and sought only for a husband who would help her to achieve this aim. Considering possible names she remembered the Lennoxes, a Catholic Scotch family exiled to England by her father, James V, because of the support its members had given to Henry VIII. Lord Lennox was a Stuart of the blood-royal of Scotland, the Countess of Lennox, his wife, a daughter of Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scotland, by her second marriage with the Earl of Angus. Their son, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, thus ran his cousin, Mary Stuart, close in the line of succession to the English throne. For this reason and the favour previously shown to the Countess by Mary Tudor at her sister's expense, he and his mother had been looked on with profound distrust by Elizabeth for some time after her accession. Perhaps it was Darnley himself who put these suspicions to sleep. Handsome in a swaggering boyish fashion, " the long lad," as he was often called, was so obviously vacant of any real brains or ability that the English Queen may have forgotten the hopes of a crown with which the ambitious Lady Lennox had flattered his vanity from his youth up.

Elizabeth's own mind had been occupied, troubled indeed, for some time with other

matters than the foolish " long lad." True to the prophecies of Robert Dudley's enemies, his wife had died in the country; and the verdict given by the coroner's jury, " it appears she fell down a staircase," though no blame was attached to her husband, did not succeed in making the people of England believe that he was innocent. Rather there was a strong feeling that he had got rid of his wife deliberately in order to clear the road for his marriage with Elizabeth, and this accusation brought discredit on her name as well as his. Mary Stuart, at that time still in France, remarked contemptuously when she heard, " the Queen of England is about to marry her horse-keeper who killed his wife to make room for her."

Whatever the truth of Dudley's guilt or innocence, the result of the tragedy was that Elizabeth banished him from Court for a while; and though she soon restored him to favour, she was obstinate henceforth in her refusal to consider him as a husband. If the matter were pressed on her attention by the favourite's friends, she " would pup with her lips and say she could not marry a subject "; yet, later, searching for suitors to recommend her royal cousin, she brought up Dudley's name with apparent seriousness, creating him Earl of Leicester that he might not lack fitting rank and dignity.

Mary, though she must have resented this offer, accepted the suggestion in the manner in which it was made; and, under cover of considering the Earl, persuaded Elizabeth to allow young Darnley to visit his father, who, his ban of exile removed, was then living on his Scottish estates. The English Queen's consent gave to her rival the victory in their first round of diplomacy. At the end of July 1565 " the long lad," having paid his respects to his father, went also to visit the Queen of Scotland, stayed some weeks at Holyrood, and was finally married to her there with much pomp and ceremony. Thus another link was forged in the chain by which Mary Stuart hoped to bind herself to the throne of England.

" For once," writes a modern historian, describing the effect of this news at Westminster, " the counsels of Elizabeth and her advisers were utterly distracted and something like panic reigned." Could the English Queen have guessed the future she might have been comforted, since Mary's marriage with Darnley was in reality the first definite step along a road that was to lead her to the block at Fotheringay.

In the game of diplomacy it is the coolest head that scores in the long run, and the Scotch Queen, though a match for Elizabeth in brains, had nothing like the same control over her feelings.

Persuading herself at the time of her marriage that she was deeply in love with her foolish young husband, she disliked him no less violently as soon as her eyes were opened to his true character. Most men would have thought themselves lucky to gain as wife not merely the Queen of Scotland, but a woman whose charms were the boast of Europe. Darnley, spoiled by his mother, accepted such good fortune as his natural due, treating " the honour, submission and obedience " that his wife at first offered him " as to her husband and king " with a bumptiousness or indifference that roused the fury of the Court at Holyrood.

Boastful, frivolous, often drunk and violent, quarrelsome even with his own followers, and sulky at the least correction of his manners, Darnley soon after his marriage found himself of no account in the world of politics. Mary, the wife whose devotion he had scorned, had become once again Mary the Queen, frankly contemptuous of her consort and wisely determined not to make him her equal partner in the work of government however much he might whine and bluster at her refusal.

What was unwise was the confidence she so openly displayed instead in her secretary, a clever Italian, David Rizzio. " No man so great with her . . . he is the whole governor of this

estate," the Scottish nobles bitterly complained; and, making Darnley their tool to rid them of the foreigner, soon roused in his fuddled brain an uncontrollable jealousy of " that vile knave Davie."

One evening, when the Scotch Queen sat at supper in her own apartments with Rizzio in attendance, Darnley, entering by a private staircase, swaggered across the room, and was almost immediately followed by a band of armed nobles. " Come forth from the Queen's chamber," shouted one of them to the secretary, " you have been here overlong," and, while Darnley held his wife so that she could not attempt to save the wretched man clinging to her skirts, the rest dragged their victim away and stabbed him to death at the head of the staircase.

" Is this your work? " Mary demanded of her husband, warning his followers that " if Rizzio's blood were spilt, it should be dear blood for some of them." Later, when the wretched boy came to beg her forgiveness in cringing terror at what he had done, assuring her it had been at the suggestion of others, she appeared ready to pardon him; but in reality nothing could blot his crime from her memory nor lessen the loathing with which she now regarded him. When, three months later, in June 1566, an heir was born to the throne of Scotland, the Queen showed none

of an ordinary mother's joy. The little James was Darnley's son, and as that " too much his child " she declared herself ever to rouse her love or interest. It was left to Elizabeth to admit the importance of the event when, taken unawares by the news, she exclaimed bitterly " the Queen of Scots is mother of a fair son and I am but a barren stock."

Affairs in Scotland moved rapidly from this date. Rizzio dead, the Queen transferred her confidence not to her husband, with whom she had pretended to be reconciled, but to a Border noble, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. Equally selfish and swaggering, the new adviser possessed just that " hardiness and valiancy " that Darnley so utterly lacked, and that Mary had always admired.

In February 1567 Darnley, recovering from small-pox, was sent for convalescence by the Queen to a lonely house in " Kirk-o-Field," on the outskirts of Edinburgh, and there, one dark night, he was blown up by gunpowder, his body being found next day in the garden slashed with wounds. There was little doubt in anyone's mind as to his murderer, and it was widely asked whether Mary would bring Bothwell to judgement? or how far she herself was guilty of a share in the crime? The answers to these questions were sufficiently startling to horrify

not only Scotland, but Europe. Mary Stuart, fascinated by the Border ruffian who appealed so strongly to all that was fierce and lawless in her own nature, became at this stage utterly indifferent to her reputation, either as woman or queen. While the Lennoxes were still clamouring that she should avenge their murdered son, she allowed herself to be kidnapped by Bothwell, the murderer, carried off to his castle of Dunbar, and there, as soon as he could procure a divorce from his wife, she consented to marry him.

Such actions were sufficient to alienate friends as well as enemies. Few even of the nobles she had made slaves by her charm in the past were prepared to serve the blustering Earl with whom she had now so recklessly thrown in her fortunes. Her people's hearts, unlike Elizabeth, she had never troubled to gain; and with the ministers of religion, amongst them Knox, " preaching hot cannons against her " from their pulpits, she was to find herself confronted by a nation in arms.

In June 1567 she and Bothwell met their foes at Carberry Hill; but so bad was their cause felt to be that his own vassals refused to fight for him, and he was forced to fly from the field, leaving the Queen to be dragged a prisoner through the streets of Edinburgh by the victorious Scottish lords. On every side rose the

shouts of the infuriated mob, " Burn her! Kill her! Drown her!" But in the end it was decided that she should be condemned to lifelong imprisonment. She was therefore sent under guard to Lochleven Castle, where she reluctantly signed a deed of abdication in favour of her infant son, soon afterwards crowned at Stirling as James VI of Scotland.

Chapter VIII

A TIME OF PLOTS

WHEN the report of Darnley's murder reached Elizabeth, she at once wrote indignantly to Mary, "men say that instead of seizing the murderers you are looking through your fingers while they escape." Later the tale of Carberry Hill and the imprisonment at Lochleven Castle turned her wrath against subjects who had thus dared to insult and dictate terms to their Queen. On hearing of the rebels' victory she prayed "that by this example none of her own might be encouraged," and began to work for Mary's freedom and restoration to the throne. It fitted in well with dreams of Tudor power that a Queen of Scotland should depend for her safety, it might be for her life, on the protection of a Queen of England; though it was a dream that, when realized in fact, was to haunt Elizabeth's peace of mind like a nightmare for nearly twenty years.

At first the royal prisoner seemed crushed by the humiliation she had suffered; but as time passed, and with it her passion for Bothwell, her

old fierce love of adventure awoke. Mary Stuart, whatever her crimes, always refused to accept defeat as final, and because of this spirit of valiancy even more than for her beauty her name has lived in history. At Lochleven her charm soon converted enemies into friends. "She won the favour and goodwill of all the household as well women as men."

One evening while the governor of the castle sat at dinner, his keys beside him on the table, a page who was waiting carelessly threw a cloth over them and so withdrew them unperceived. He then fled, locking the door behind him. Outside, the keys were snatched from his hand by the governor's youngest son, Willie Douglas, a lad of fourteen, who promptly released the Queen and led her down to a small boat moored at the castle steps. Locked up in his dining hall the governor, in helpless fury, watched from the windows the boat row out of sight across the lake; and there on the other side a band of Scottish nobles, still faithful to Mary's cause, received her joyfully, and mounting her on a horse rode away with her into safety.

Before many days had passed Scotland learned that her Queen had escaped from prison, withdrawn her abdication, and summoned all loyal subjects to her standard. At Langside, with the small army she had collected, she again met her

foes, the Scottish lords; but she trusted too soon that the past on which she had resolutely turned her own back would be blotted out from the memory of others. For the second time she was defeated by her subjects; and, flying from the battlefield to escape capture, rode for sixty miles with scarce a break until she reached the northern shores of the Solway Firth.

Over that grey stretch of water lay England, whose ruler throughout the dark days she had spent in Lochleven Castle she had found, if patronizing, at least friendly. Some shelter Mary must seek at once from the wrath of her pursuers, so in a fisherman's boat she crossed the Firth and, sending word of who she was to the Warden of Carlisle Castle, was welcomed by him with every sign of respect.

Elizabeth, when she was told the news, appeared unusually moved. "The bird," she said, "had flown to her for succour from the hawk"; but the bird had wild blood, and very soon she was wishing that the hawk had been a little swifter on the wing and not allowed his prey to get away so easily.

Mary came to Carlisle in no humble spirit. Her letters expressed little repentance for her past sins, dwelling almost entirely on the burning indignation she felt at the way in which her subjects had dared to treat her. Like Elizabeth,

she believed that rulers were divinely appointed by God, who alone had the right to judge or punish them, and, since the Queen of England had sympathized with her while she was imprisoned at Lochleven, she now made a passionate appeal to her for some practical help. Her immediate need was clothes; and her cousin chose and sent her from an extensive wardrobe "two torn shifts, two pieces of velvet and two pairs of shoes." It was a bad omen, and Mary with a shrug of her shoulders soon summed up any assistance she was likely to obtain in that quarter as "fair words enough but no deeds."

Impatiently she sought leave either to visit the English Court, where she counted on her charm to make a favourable impression, or else a safe conduct that would enable her to find refuge in France. Elizabeth refused both. "When you are acquitted of this crime I will receive you with all honour: till that is done I may not," she wrote; and hastily called a Commission, or Court of Enquiry, to consider Darnley's murder and the question of Mary's guilt or innocence.

It was as proof of her guilt that the Scottish lords laid before the Court the famous "Casket Letters," supposed to have been written by Mary to Bothwell, and left behind by him in a silver casket on his hasty flight from Edinburgh

Castle. If genuine they were proof not merely that the Queen had agreed to her husband's murder, but that she had actually helped to plan it. Mary steadily protested that her handwriting had been forged; and though the world as a whole refused to accept her statement, she found enough supporters to leave the Casket Letters an historical mystery.

Elizabeth on her part made no real attempt to solve it. She was intent at the minute on her old game of diplomacy rather than on justice, and had appointed the Commission merely to gain time while she thought out her plans. Before it came to any definite decision on the evidence, she dissolved it; while, through her secret agents, she informed her prisoner that she was ready to close her eyes to the past if Mary would consent in return to abdicate once more in favour of her son. The boy, thus undisputed King of Scotland, would then be acknowledged by her as heir to the throne of England, and with the assent of the Scottish lords be brought up at the English Court. Considering how black was the case against the Queen of Scots, and how small the chance that her subjects would ever willingly accept her again as their ruler, the terms offered were generous. Mary Stuart, however, had no affection for her son, while desire for revenge and a belief in her own star also led her

to refuse. She had received a warm welcome from Elizabeth's subjects in the North, who were at first allowed to visit her freely. Counting on this popularity and the reports of her agents abroad, she was certain she held trump cards that, played with cunning, might yet cheat her rival of the crown of England, even though she failed to recover that of Scotland.

England we have seen was not in Tudor times the united country it is to-day. Catholic North and partly Protestant South were often opposed in outlook and interests; so much so, that Mary Tudor, disliking the Protestant Londoners, had thought of removing her capital to York, while the French King, during the Guise regency, had boasted that he could push the boundary of Scotland southwards from the Tweed to the Humber. In this he was wrong. So long as Mary Stuart remained in France, the wife of a French Prince, all Englishmen would have risen in arms to resist her claims; but when she appeared years later on English soil, a widow unprotected by any foreign power, and the undoubted successor to the throne were Elizabeth to die, matters assumed a different aspect. On her own showing Mary should have been Queen of England at the minute instead of her cousin; and the Catholics of the North who, like her, did not believe that Henry VIII's marriage with

Anne Boleyn had been legal, found it difficult to answer or resist her arguments.

Self-interest increased the doubts of the great nobles as to their heretic sovereign; for Elizabeth, like her father and grandfather, pursued a policy of humbling them when she could by showing favour at their expense to a new governing class composed of men such as her Ministers Cecil and Walsingham. Where in old days the feudal aristocracy had been all powerful at the Court and had controlled Parliament, now, when its members came to Westminster, they found themselves only of secondary importance. If they wished to strut about as little kings, they learned that they must keep to their own estates; and many of them preferred to do so, brooding in sullen disloyalty over the change in their fortunes.

Elizabeth never could be quite sure how far this disaffection and Mary's plots were likely to provoke actual rebellion. Even in the South her spies told her there was a faction of discontented nobles in league with those in the North. It was led by the ambitious Duke of Norfolk, who had allied himself by marriage with several of the great families of England. A widower for the third time, the Duke, though a Protestant, aspired to Mary Stuart's hand, but could not make up his mind whether it would be wiser to

try and gain Elizabeth's consent to his suit, or, disregarding her altogether, to join with the Catholic conspirators of the North in asserting his right to choose a wife when and where he pleased.

Though he would not confess it, Norfolk was at heart afraid of the English Queen, and, " a lion " when he talked to the Spanish ambassador about his plans, he became " a hare " as soon as he reached the royal presence. On one occasion he actually rode down to Richmond determined to broach the matter, but on his arrival " fell into an ague and was fain to get him to bed without his dinner." Elizabeth, who had been warned of what he had in mind, attempted the next morning to help him put it in words, and when, in answer to her question what news was abroad he muttered there was none of which he knew, she suggested archly " None! You come from London and can tell me no news of a marriage? " By this time the Duke was in such a pitiable state of nerves that not even so broad a hint could bring him to the point. He was frankly alarmed, and determined to go no further with his marriage project until he had consulted his friends in the North. Without taking leave of the Queen he left the Palace, but was followed by her orders, arrested, and soon found himself lodged in the Tower.

Elizabeth had calculated shrewdly that such nervousness on the Duke's part must bespeak a bad conscience. Had he intended no disloyalty to herself by his marriage, he would hardly have been afraid to mention it when she gave him such an opening. " Were I to consent," she remarked to Leicester, " I would be in the Tower before four months were over," and took prompt steps that Mary Stuart, who was in prison at Tutbury, should be removed for greater safety to Coventry in the Midlands.

The northern lords, who had been anxiously waiting a signal from Norfolk to start their rebellion, were thrown into confusion by his arrest. Either he had betrayed them or been himself betrayed, and without him they could not agree as to their best policy. " What is our quarrel to be? " demanded the old Earl of Westmorland, who was a Catholic. He was answered " For Religion! " but to this he replied, uneasily, " Those that seem to take that quarrel in other countries are counted rebels, and I will never blot my name, which has been preserved thus long without staining."

An appeal was then made to certain priests " whether by God's law they might wage battle against an anointed prince until he or she was lawfully excommunicated by the Head of the Church? " Again there were divided opinions;

upon which some of the nobles, refusing to wait until the doubters had been convinced, broke into open rebellion. They entered Durham with an armed following, threw down the Communion-board in the Cathedral, tore in pieces the Bible and prayer-books, and having restored the ancient stone altar held a solemn Mass. Then they marched southwards, enrolling recruits as they went in the name of the old faith; but many who had promised their support failed to give it when the moment came, including Philip II of Spain, who always liked to make sure of victory before he parted with more than words. At the approach of the royal forces under the Earl of Sussex, the rebels broke and fled.

Thus ended the " Rising of the North " of 1569, " the only English rebellion that disturbed the long reign of Elizabeth." It was stamped out with severity, for Elizabeth, never alarmed for her personal safety, had been badly frightened by this conspiracy against her throne; and some six or seven hundred peasants, who had merely answered the call of their leaders to restore the old faith, were hung on their village greens in order to strike terror into northern hearts. The nobles suffered less, Norfolk himself being released as soon as the danger appeared past, and the English Queen felt she could afford to be merciful.

Yet all danger to her throne was by no means over, as the successive plots of the next eighteen years were to show. The difference between them and the " Rising of the North " lay in the fact that though their object was still to make Mary Stuart Queen of England, they now had their origin in foreign Courts. No longer Mary looked to hesitating Dukes of Norfolk or Border Earls to plan her deliverance, though she was willing enough to use them as her tools. The plots that she wove first in one prison-house and then another, as Mr. Secretary Walsingham and his spies unwound her web and subjected her to ever closer confinement, depended henceforward mainly on foreign allies.

The reason for this change may be found in the Bull of Pope Pius V that, published in the year 1570, excommunicated Elizabeth, declaring her deprived of her kingdom, and absolving her subjects from their oath of allegiance. This " bull " set at rest the doubts of northern Catholics as to their duty in any future rebellion, but behind and beyond such an intention lay others far more important. Pius V had been moved by no sudden explosion of wrath against the English Queen when he thus openly proclaimed himself her enemy; rather, he was taking a deliberate step in that big movement we call the Counter-Reformation.

The Reformation, we have seen, was concerned with the revolt of national churches against the authority of Rome. The Counter-Reformation was the effort made by Rome to recover the ground she had lost in this struggle. To a considerable extent she succeeded, partly because the various Protestant sects fell to quarrelling amongst themselves; but also because she roused herself to put her own house in order, insisting on a higher standard of morality amongst her clergy and trying to inspire them with a new spirit of devotion to their faith.

One instance of this Catholic revival was the foundation of the Order of Jesuits about the year 1540 by a Spanish noble, Ignatius Loyola. Its object was to wage war on heretics, just as in earlier centuries Templars and Knights of St. John had devoted their lives to crusades against the Moslems. Loyola was a soldier by profession and organized his "Company of Jesus" on the lines of an army whose members were bound by a vow of unquestioning obedience to their "General"; while the General took an oath in his turn to submit entirely to the authority of the Pope. In this way a weapon was placed ready to the hand of Counter-Reformation leaders just when they were planning an attack upon their enemies the Protestants.

In the fierce struggle that ensued, religion and politics became hopelessly mixed, and right and wrong were often lost sight of by both sides while they did the thing that seemed of most advantage at the minute. Elizabeth had been Queen of England for twelve years when the Pope at last excommunicated her and declared her deposed: but neither the fact that she had been accepted as rightful sovereign by the majority of her people, nor the increasing prosperity of the country under her rule, could weigh in his eyes against her influence as a heretic at that crisis. Were Elizabeth dead or dethroned, a Catholic Queen, Mary Stuart, would reign in England, and, looking forward to this happy day as the sure beginning of the restoration of the universal Church under the authority of Rome, Pius V let loose against the daughter of Anne Boleyn all the forces of religious bitterness, violence, and treachery that the Counter-Reformation had in store.

From 1570 the whole aspect of the religious question in England alters. Up to this time the greater number of Catholics had been faithful subjects of Elizabeth: now, because of the Bull of Excommunication, through no fault of their own, they were suspected by the Government; and the Queen, whose religious views were in sympathy with theirs rather than those of the

Protestants, was forced to throw in her lot with the latter in order to preserve her throne.

In 1572 it was discovered that Ridolfi, an Italian banker in London, acting as the secret agent of Mary Queen of Scots and Philip II, was planning a Spanish invasion of England that was to take place at the same time as the murder of the Queen and a rebellion at home. The Duke of Norfolk had once more his finger in the pie, and this time suffered as he deserved for his treachery; for though Elizabeth tried to save him, Parliament, that was busy passing heavy treason laws as England's answer to the Bull of Excommunication, demanded that he should die. Let her Majesty remember, they petitioned, " how needful it is for her to take heed upon whose life depends the whole commonwealth, the utter ruin of the whole country, and the utter subversion of religion."

Reluctantly Elizabeth agreed to the Duke's execution; but when Parliament also pressed her to pass sentence of death on Mary Stuart as well she would not hear of it, nor even that her royal cousin should be " either enabled or disabled to or from any manner of title to the crown." For the next fifteen years she stood between the Queen of Scotland and the anger of her own subjects as expressed in the House of Commons and at her council-board; while

throughout the country Catholics and Protestants came to look on each other with ever-increasing bitterness.

The Spanish ambassador wrote to his master at this time that the English Catholics were " willing to sacrifice life and all in the service, but scarcely with that burning zeal they ought to show." By " the service " he meant the restoration of papal authority, and in order to stimulate flagging zeal England was flooded with Jesuit priests, numbers of them Englishmen who had been trained at the Catholic College at Douai founded by a Lancashire Catholic, William Allen, for this very purpose.

Some of the priests sent over, such as Edward Campion, were pure-minded missionaries, anxious only to restore lost souls to the papal fold. Others, like Robert Parsons, were conspirators, using religion as a disguise for the treason they plotted against the Government. Both were hunted down by Elizabeth's officials from village to village, holding services at the peril of their lives in barns or by the roadside, and seeking refuge from arrest in one of the " priests' hiding-places " still to be seen in old Tudor mansions. In the end Parsons, " the lurking wolf," made good his escape to the Continent, while Campion suffered torture and death for the crime of treason he had never committed.

Owing to the prevailing confusion between religion and politics it was difficult to distinguish the innocent from the guilty; though indeed many of Elizabeth's councillors had no wish to do so where Catholics were concerned. The old spirit of toleration the Government had shown at the beginning of the reign had almost disappeared, and between the light penalties laid down by the Act of Uniformity of 1559 for those not attending the Established Church, and the Recusancy Laws of 1581, that inflicted a fine of £20 a month, there is a marked contrast.

In December 1583 the discovery of " Throgmorton's Plot " to assassinate Elizabeth and set Mary Stuart on the throne with the aid of French and Spanish troops aroused fresh indignation in England amongst the Protestants. Their leaders, Burghley and Walsingham, determined that if, in spite of all their efforts, such an attempt were to succeed, it should not do so unavenged. By the " Bond of Association," founded in the following year, they and the majority of Elizabeth's more powerful subjects bound themselves in the event of the Queen's murder " to put to death the person on whose behalf the crime was committed." Names were not mentioned, but the document was none the less a nation's challenge to Mary Stuart.

" Mors Elizabethae vita Mariae; vita Mariae mors Elizabethae." " The death of Elizabeth is

life to Mary; the life of Mary death to Elizabeth." In these words the Spanish ambassador had cynically summed up the situation; though the English Queen shut her eyes to it, and tried to do so still when, in 1586, "Babington's Plot," a fresh conspiracy against her person, came to light. Further enquiry by her spies showed that the Queen of Scotland had undoubtedly known and approved of the suggested murder. "I was in duty bound to seek my deliverance," protested the wild bird, beating its wings against the bars of Fotheringay Castle, in a secret letter to her Spanish friends: "and since I had tried fair means unsuccessfully was obliged therefore to listen to other proposals made to me with the same object."

In 1586 she was tried at Fotheringay on a charge of treason and found guilty, and, when Lords and Commons met at Westminster soon afterwards, they petitioned Elizabeth: "We have seen by how manifold, most dangerous and execrable practices Mary, commonly called the Queen of Scots, hath compassed the destruction of your Majesty's sacred person. . . . We therefore humbly beseech your Highness to take speedy order to execute the sentence, because we cannot find any means to provide for your safety but by the speedy execution of the said Queen."

Still Elizabeth hesitated. The condemned

prisoner was royal, a Queen, her own cousin. Heartily she wished her dead, but dreaded, even with the support of Parliament, to accept responsibility for her fate in the eyes of her world and future generations. When at length she yielded to the persuasion of her ministers, it was with no grand gesture of a sovereign executing justice, but with so great a lack of dignity that in this last stage of their rivalry the Scottish Queen seemed again the victor.

She " nothing common did or mean " might have been written of Mary Stuart's death at Fotheringay on the 1st of February 1587, as it was of her grandson's at Whitehall more than half a century later. There was no hesitation here, no cowardice as she bade her weeping servants " ne criez-pas ! " and commended her soul to God. She who had loved " valiancy " faced the axe with a dignity and courage that have helped to plead her cause before the bar of history. In contrast we see Elizabeth, having at length signed the death-warrant, pettishly forbid Davison, her Secretary of State, " to trouble her any further or let her hear any more thereof till it was done " ; then, when messengers brought news it was done indeed, repudiate all responsibility, and protest her grief with a noise and show of indignation that deceived no one, least of all herself.

Yet, if we are to be fair to the memory of the rival Queens, we must not judge them by these scenes. Elizabeth Tudor, though she failed when her moral courage was put to the test on this occasion, could always match Mary Stuart in contempt of danger; while as a ruler she was capable of a devotion to her country of which the other never even dreamed. Brilliant in brains, spirit, and endurance, Mary was handicapped as Queen by her upbringing on a foreign soil. She learned to love France, but not the land or people she was called to rule, and that she sacrificed persistently to her own ambitions. When she died, she passed to her grave "forgotten and unrevenged" by the Scotland she had never served.

Chapter IX

A GAME OF BLUFF

IN our last chapter we saw England and Elizabeth standing bravely at bay amid threats of invasion and constant plots of assassination. This is a true as well as a popular picture of the reign, but there is another side to the canvas equally true though sometimes forgotten. In this second picture England is the aggressor, not awaiting her enemies' attacks, but even provoking them by the daring insolence of her buccaneer raids on the Spanish Main and by her Queen's high-handed treatment of her neighbours.

Pius V, when he excommunicated Elizabeth and declared her deposed, had hoped that the Catholic Kings of France and Spain would at once join together in a crusade against England. This they refused to do, complaining of his "bull" as ill-timed and rash; for while they would have been each of them glad to hear the English Queen was dead, neither wished to undertake the responsibility of invading her country when she was still alive. Instead, so

frightened were they lest she should send help to their own rebellious subjects, as she had to the " Lords of the Congregation " in Scotland, that they began, outwardly at least, to compete for her friendship.

Before France could feel safe she must subdue her heretic Huguenots; while in the chain of Philip II's dominions there was always a weak link in the Spanish Netherlands, many of whose inhabitants were Protestants and longed to throw off the oppressive yoke of " the Catholic King." This they realized could not be done unless they could count on foreign aid, and therefore they looked anxiously towards England in the hope of assistance. At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign Englishmen, however, in spite of the dislike they felt for Philip II himself, still hated the French far more than Spaniards. This hatred was largely the result of prejudice, and that they had grown up in the belief that Frenchmen were their natural enemies with whom it was almost a religious duty to go and fight, whereas during the Middle Ages Castile had been their country's constant friend. As late as the fifteenth century, when a French ship was wrecked off the Isle of Wight, the inhabitants offered the captain and crew food and drink, and a six hours' rest if they would agree afterwards to a pitched battle. By the sixteenth century this spirit had begun to

cool; but the loss of Calais, dinning its cry of shame into the nation's ears, roused it afresh; and Elizabeth's policy of seeking friendship with France, in order to guard herself against the enmity of Spain that she wisely realized was far more dangerous, was extremely unpopular with her subjects.

Fortunately for national interests the Queen paid little heed to public criticisms or petitions. By dexterously confusing the question of her marriage and the country's foreign policy, and insisting that the former was most certainly her private business, she kept all the threads of continental affairs in her own hands. For a time she encouraged the suggestion that she might marry the Duke of Anjou, a brother of the French King, Charles IX. Later, after this match had fallen through, she professed a romantic interest in a still younger brother, the Duke of Alençon, although he was a youth of little more than twenty when she was already in her fortieth year.

Alençon was short, pock-marked, and disfigured by a swollen nose; so plain that, when the Queen complained of these blemishes to the French ambassador, he could only say severely, "Madam, it were expedient that you thought less of physical beauty provided that the work of God be done." Elizabeth had no intention

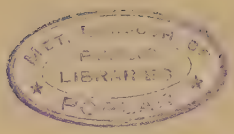
of marrying Alençon. She merely found him excellent bait when angling for his country's support, and now she remarked coquettishly that of course " the Prince could come to England if he wished but he must not take offence if she did not like him when she saw him." Such an answer had hitherto kept most royal suitors at a safe distance, unwilling to face the ridicule of Europe if their courtship ended in failure; but the Duke of Alençon, if he was not a fairy prince in form, was a lad of spirit, and, despite the warnings of his mother, Catharine de Medicis, that the English Queen was only playing with him, he accepted her invitation.

" Froggy would a-wooing go
Whether his mother would let him or no! "

So runs the nursery rhyme that can be traced back to a popular London street song of this date. Yet the little Duke when he appeared was so gallant in his courtship, and so captivated Elizabeth by his sprightly manner and flattering attentions, that she was heard to remark she was delighted with " her little frog," and would have no objection to his becoming her husband. This graciousness led the French ambassador, hitherto very suspicious of her real intentions, to believe that the ridiculous match might take place after all ; while the people of England,

THE DUKE D'ALENÇON

(*From a drawing at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*)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who had looked on at the wooing at first in derision, became both alarmed and enraged.

Their ordinary dislike of their neighbour across the Channel had deepened for a time indeed into active hatred when, in 1572, they heard of the wholesale slaughter of Huguenots in Paris and other large towns of France that is called the " Massacre of St. Bartholomew " from the day on which it was perpetrated. This deed of butchery had been carried out by the orders of the young King Charles IX, at the instigation of the Queen-Mother, Catharine de Medicis; and the news, while it made the gloomy Philip II smile, plunged the English Court into mourning. As terrified Huguenots, contriving their escape across the Channel in any manner of boat they could find, spread the tale of the ghastly murder of their kindred, English indignation grew. The French ambassador, at first refused an audience, when he was at last admitted to the royal presence found Elizabeth dressed all in black. With averted face she listened to his halting excuses, and when he tried to explain that the massacre was the result of panic caused by a deep-laid plot against his government, she answered coldly that no plot could excuse the slaughter of innocent women and children. So angry was she and aloof to all French advances that the King of Spain rubbed his hands with

joy, believing the alliance between France and England he so much dreaded was now definitely at an end.

Time passed, however, and Elizabeth, conscious once more of her need of French support, allowed her anger to be soothed by assurances that young Alençon at least had taken no part in the massacre. To her annoyance her subjects proved more obdurate; and Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, writing about the suggested marriage of Queen and Duke in the year 1579, says " the people in general seem to threaten revolution about it."

He did not understand England. The people might grumble but they had no intention of making a revolution against their Queen however much they were annoyed with her, as the case of John Stubbs plainly showed. Stubbs, a gentleman of Norfolk belonging to the extreme Protestant sect called " Puritans," was arrested for publishing a pamphlet entitled *Discovery of a gaping gulf wherein England is like to be swallowed up by another French marriage if the Lord forbid not the banns by letting her see the sin and punishment thereof*. Elizabeth, fully determined all the time not to marry Alençon, but unable to say so in public for fear of annoying the French, was furious at this criticism of her policy. Already she had stalked out of church in the middle of a sermon that had dared to denounce the match,

and now royal judges condemned Stubbs to stand in the pillory and suffer the loss of his right hand for his presumption.

Waving the still bleeding stump, and lifting his hat with his left hand, the prisoner cried aloud "God save the Queen." This heroic loyalty awoke no answering cheer from a crowd that sympathized with him rather than with those who had condemned him, but in their silence was no hint of revolutionary fervour. Elizabeth might do wrong in the eyes of her people (only her courtiers assured her she could not), but, wrong or right, they fully realized that she was their one safeguard during these years and must act as she thought fit even in opposition to their wishes.

In the end their fears proved groundless, for Alençon, like his brother Anjou, followed numberless royal suitors down the long lane of rejection, and took himself home rebuffed. At first an amusement he had become a nuisance to Elizabeth who was shrewd enough, when vanity would let her, to value his attentions at their true worth. She once confessed "her servants and favourites professed to love her for her high qualities, Alençon for her beauty, and the Scots for her crown, but they all wanted the same thing: they wanted nothing but her money, and they should not have it."

The final parting was as ridiculous as the rest

of the courtship; for Alençon, deceived by the gift of a ring and Elizabeth's pie-crust promises, blustered loudly that she had sworn to accept him and that he would not leave the country without her, then wept with injured vanity and had to borrow her handkerchief to dry his tears. The lady, in her turn, made a suitable show of grief, " consoling him with words more tender than even the occasion demanded," though the Spanish ambassador mentions that in her private room she was dancing with delight to think she would be so soon quit of him.

After Alençon had actually sailed, Elizabeth still kept up her pretence of caring for him, sighing at intervals that " her little frog was no longer swimming in the Thames," and even discussing the idea of his possible return in a few months. This was all a pretext for maintaining those friendly relations with France she considered essential to her country's safety, a policy that did not meet with the full approval of her chief adviser Burghley. Although the Secretary of State admitted that Calais was but a " toy," over the loss of which it was stupid for a grown-up nation to bear a grudge, yet he was too sunk in the old ruts to be able to rise above them and recognize in Spain, rather than England's hereditary enemy, her great danger at the minute.

Spain we have seen, thanks to the guidance of

Christopher Columbus, was the discoverer of the New World and the first European Power to make use of that great ocean road, the Atlantic, thereby changing the course of the world's commerce. Portugal, with her discoveries along the African coast culminating in Vasco da Gama's safe arrival in India by the Cape route in 1498, proved next in the field of adventure and colonization; and so ahead of all other seafaring nations were these two races of Spaniards and Portuguese that in 1493 Pope Alexander VI, trying to prevent their quarrels, divided the New World between them. For this purpose he drew an imaginary line on the map from North Pole to South, about one hundred miles west of the Azores, and declared that the newly discovered lands which lay to the west of this line should belong to Spain, while all to the east should go to Portugal.

So the matter rested for a while; and then at last England began to wake from her long sleep " too late to possess the Spice Islands, too late for India and the Cape of Good Hope, too late it would seem for the New World." Yet envy rather than resentment had been her first feeling as she realized the situation, and during the reigns of Edward VI and Mary her explorers were occupied chiefly not in disputing the new trade routes with those already in possession, but in

attempting to discover a separate North-east passage to Cathay.

Such efforts ended in ice-fields and failure, though parties of merchants, landing at Archangel and other northern ports, succeeded in reaching the Court of Moscow, and in 1555 founded the Muscovy Company for purposes of trade with Russia. More important, however, than any commercial results was the effect of that closed door of ice in the north-east on the minds of adventurous Englishmen. Towards the end of Mary's reign they began to look once more to the west, but when they demanded leave to trade there, Philip II, who considered the New World as his private preserve, curtly refused the demand. It was little wonder then if Englishmen came to regard his joint rule with Mary Tudor as a one-sided bargain; and soon, from grumbling and protesting against his veto, they began to defy it. Spanish colonies had by now been established in the West Indian islands, along the shores of Mexico, and in South America; and with all these places English merchant-adventurers engaged in trade, taking at first some pains to conceal their dealings, but later, in the reign of Elizabeth, with open and care-free insolence.

The Marian martyrs had taught their countrymen to defy the Pope's decrees: and in all the

English seaports sun-bronzed crews, back from raiding the Spanish Main, scoffingly asked their fellow citizens by what right a bishop of Rome had parcelled out the New World amongst his favourites? Rather it should belong to whoever could enforce the claim to trade and settle there. In fulfilment of this boast they ran their cargoes of merchandize across the Atlantic into the harbours of Cuba, St. Domingo, and the American mainland under the very guns of the Spanish forts and in the teeth of unavailing protests from their governors. For the return journey they loaded up their holds with spices, silks, and bullion seized from the colonists who often surrendered them readily enough, though they made a pretence of doing so under fear of death.

Colonies in the sixteenth century had as a rule less cause to love their home-land than strangers; for the countries to which they belonged behaved like cruel stepmothers, forcing their children across the seas to provide them with coveted luxuries, and in return dumping on colonial ports and markets whatever they pleased. Spanish settlers, for instance, in Peru and Chile were forbidden to plant vines, olives, or corn. When they persisted in doing so, Philip II gave orders that their harvests should be set on fire and destroyed by his officials. " It is the King's will," wrote a merchant of Seville in 1570, " that

all such articles should be exported from our country . . . in order that his revenue and taxes within and without the land may flourish exceedingly." With no word of pity for the colonists he adds, "the King was not a little put out that they should have proved to be thus contumacious."

Philip was even more put out when the extent to which Spanish commerce was passing into English hands became apparent. In order to work the gold and silver mines that had been discovered in America, the colonies were always in need of labourers who, unlike Europeans, could stand the tropical climate. The native Indians proved far too delicate for the work they were required to do by their conquerors, dying off like flies under the strain of the terrific heat and the cruelty of their masters. It was to supply their place that the iniquitous slave trade with West Africa began, a trade that few or none even of the greatest men of the sixteenth century, whether Catholics or Protestants, condemned as wrong, though to a later age its bloodstained record sullies much of the heroic story of the Spanish Main.

West African negroes fetched £150 apiece in Spanish markets; by kidnapping them or buying them from their native chiefs in the villages of Guinea and transporting them to South America

where they sold them to the colonists, John Hawkins and other English sea-captains not only built up fortunes, but taught a younger generation, that included the great Sir Francis Drake, how to handle any ship and face adventures on sea or land with reckless daring.

Philip II, furious at this poaching on his preserves, commanded his fleets to capture and punish these insolent Englishmen; and in the struggle that ensued mere commercial rivalry soon became merged in the hatred of one race for another, and this again in religious bitterness. As the result of the bull of excommunication and plots to assassinate their Queen, England was growing more Protestant every day, and this tendency was further increased by the treatment meted out to her sons on the Spanish Main. When their vessels ran ashore on some West Indian reef or were captured after a stiff fight in a harbour of Hispaniola, English prisoners discovered that the fate before them was not the noose from a yard-arm, which they might reasonably have expected, but the Inquisition with its torture-chambers and cruel death at the stake. It was as heretics Philip II insisted they should suffer and die: and their comrades, swarming the seas in ever-increasing numbers to revenge them, came on their part to look on piracy as a kind of Protestant crusade, with

hunting down " dogs of papists " and looting chapels as a praiseworthy occupation.

Elizabeth did not altogether share this outlook. Like Mary Stuart she loved " valiancy," and like her grandfather Henry VII, " the gathering and heaping up of treasure." The two combined, as in the deeds of Hawkins and Drake, proved a temptation she could not resist, and many were the shares she invested in raiding expeditions, and still larger the profits she exacted when the vessels with their spoils came safely home to port. On the other hand, since England was nominally at peace with Philip II, her ruler must at least pretend that she knew nothing of the " wild corsairs " whose exploits were responsible for " the much labour and sorrow in traffic with the New World," of which a Spaniard of the time feelingly complains.

When English ships sailing

> " South by west and a quarter west
> And hey for the Spanish Main! "

did not come safely home to port but were towed into some West Indian harbour, their crew in chains, these men realized their Queen would not, or could not, raise a hand to save them. To have done so Elizabeth would have had to commit her country to an open war with Philip II,

a crisis that for many years she desired as little as " the Catholic King " himself.

What was really happening in Europe during these years from 1570 to 1588 was a gigantic game of bluff between England and Spain. When Philip protested that he was quite unaware of any plots to assassinate Elizabeth, and she in return expressed polite regret at being unable to prevent her subjects from looting his treasure-ships on their way home, neither believed the other for an instant. They did not even hope to deceive. Each of them wished to annoy and injure the other without being forced into a war. Each of them was experimenting to discover exactly how much the other would endure without declaring war.

" England is a large island with many ports in it," was Elizabeth's airy retort to the Spanish ambassador when he accused her of lending money to her sea-captains in order that they might go on West Indian raids. It amused her to plead her ignorance and helplessness, but the Spaniard was blind to this sort of humour, and, losing his temper, blustered " if your Majesty will not hear words we must come to cannon and see if you will hear them." He had made a mistake. His companion became at once both dignified and resentful of his insolence, " Quietly, in her most natural voice," he wrote home, " as

though she were telling a common story, she said ' If you use threats of that kind I will fling you in a dungeon.' " Elizabeth was not afraid, never had been in fact, of " the Colossus stuffed with clouts." She knew the weakness of his vast empire, and, like the younger generation of her subjects, mocked at his windy claims to dominate worlds both old and new.

Yet between the outlook of Queen and people there was a difference. Elizabeth, hating war and its inevitable expenses, was quite content to annoy her enemy with pin-prick thrusts and let their quarrel drift to the judgement seat of time for final decision. The heroes of the Spanish Main, and those who supported them in the Privy Council, longed on the contrary to put their country's fate to the test of open battle. It is easy, in the light of our after-knowledge, to declare them wholly right and their royal mistress wrong in her policy of bluff, but, when we turn in the next chapter to consider England at war, we must remember that these years of waiting gave to English seamenjust the experience they needed to enable them to put to rout Spain's " Invincible Armada."

Chapter X

THE ARMADA

"THE Golden Sea," "The Treasure House of the World," such were the names given to the Pacific Ocean and its Spanish harbours in the sixteenth century. For many years no English vessel sailed upon its waters; but when in 1572 that bold adventurer Francis Drake landed on the Isthmus of Darien, and, climbing a tree, gazed for the first time across that boundless expanse of blue, he determined that he himself would be the first Englishman to make this voyage. Kneeling on the ground, we are told, "he humbly besought Almighty God of His goodness to give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship in that sea."

Drake was Devonshire born, a thick-set, brown-haired, grey-eyed man of middle height, who had served his apprenticeship under John Hawkins the slaver, and learned in the course of many a sea-fight to think of the Spaniard if not as the Devil himself, then as his agent for oppressing the world. Certain of God's blessing

on his scheme to loot the harbours of the Spanish Main, he set about realizing it in his practical fashion as soon as he returned to England. His first need was ships, and the money for these he quickly obtained after secret interviews with the Queen and her Court. Enthusiastic about his project, he painted such glowing pictures of the gold and jewels he intended to bring back from King Philip's treasure house, that all who listened were eager to take shares in the venture. Elizabeth made a bargain, however, that since she was not at war with Spain, and did not wish to be, the real object of the expedition must be concealed, and when Drake sailed from Plymouth Harbour it was given out both in that port and in London that he was bound "on a voyage to Egypt."

All the same, the majority of his crews were well aware that not the Mediterranean, but the scarcely tracked oceans of the New World were to be their road. Seasoned explorers like their leader they did not care, for they held it an honour to serve under Captain Drake and face the perils of storm, hidden reefs, and even the Spanish Inquisition in such famous company. A Castilian officer, compelled at one time to live for some weeks as a prisoner on Drake's flag-ship, notes in his diary "how greatly he was feared and reverenced by all on board." He possessed

indeed exactly that gift for managing men that Philip II's commanders so often lacked, because they were not chosen for their experience or character, but for reasons of birth or influence at Court.

Officers and ratings on Castilian vessels were kept by Spanish etiquette so rigidly apart that little understanding or sympathy was possible between them. Since the don, or hidalgo, considered it degrading to work with his hands, he must stand by twirling his moustache and waiting the opportunity to make use of his Toledan rapier while English officers were busy assisting their men with the sails or dragging the guns into position. " I should like to see the gentleman that will refuse to set his hand to a rope," Drake once remarked to one of his staff who was attempting to ape Castilian manners, adding peremptorily, " I must have gentlemen to hale and draw with the mariners."

The keen-eyed, hard-mouthed Devonshire sailor had a short way in truth with mutineers or drones. Those who sailed with him must be prepared, if food ran short, to live on biscuit " that was biscuit no longer but a powder full of worms," or to suck the raw hides that protected the vessel's sides rather than turn back on the course they had chosen. Such contempt of hardship as of danger suited the spirit of the day

that longed for adventure, and was willing to pay the full price. When the Elizabethan poet, Michael Drayton, wrote—

" A thousand kingdoms will we seek from far . . .
And those unchristened countries call our own
Where scarce the name of England hath been known,"

he was stating the ambition of the youth of his day.

In 1580, almost three years from the time he had set sail, Francis Drake put once more into Plymouth Harbour in his ship the *Golden Hind*, having driven his furrow round the world and left King Philip the poorer by more than £750,000 in looted gold, silver, and precious stones. His fellow countrymen, when the news leaked out, went nearly mad with joy and pride. Even Elizabeth forgot to be prudent and make her usual pretence of scolding a prodigal, since that prodigal's ship was ballasted with silver ingots, and contained gifts for herself of a diamond cross and a crown set with enormous emeralds. Instead, she ordered the *Golden Hind* to be brought round to Deptford that she might inspect it in person, and, having banqueted on board and listened to her hero's tales of his exploits, she asked him for his sword. " It may serve thee yet though thou hast carried it round

the world," she remarked, " but now it must perform another service," and, having bade him kneel down, she knighted him on the deck of his own ship.

Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, was naturally furious when he learned what attentions had been lavished on " that corsair Drake." For a time he sulkily kept to his own apartments, refusing to go and see the Queen. " I have thought it my duty," he wrote home, " to answer their large talk with some choler. I have given out that unless complete restitution be made of all that has been taken there will be a perpetual war with Spain; and I have tried to make the men feel here that if they break with us they are lost."

This attempt to frighten England with the bogey of Spanish wrath was quite useless, because only a few elderly statesmen at the Court cared whether King Philip was angry with them or not. Burghley indeed saw Drake through Castilian eyes as merely a thief on a grand scale, and sternly refused to share his plunder; but the younger generation of Englishmen who now sat at the Queen's council-board had no such scruples. To them Spain, whatever its professions of friendship, and not France, as in earlier days, was the real enemy of England. As for the seamen, they looked on " singeing King

Philip's beard " as a popular sport, the object of the game being to see how far that monarch would suffer insult without retaliating by an open declaration of war.

It was at the suggestion of actual war that Elizabeth always became cautious. After her first outburst of enthusiasm over Drake's daring exploit, she had returned to her old policy of bluff, assuring the Spanish ambassador that she regretted what had happened, and that of course it was her intention to restore the stolen booty. For this purpose she had it publicly registered and stamped with the royal seal; but when the moment came for returning it she equally, of course, declined to do so, saying in excuse that Spain was secretly supporting Catholic rebels in Ireland. " If the Pope or your King send any help into Ireland, I will let out at Flanders," she roundly informed Mendoza, thus turning the tables of complaint upon him.

Flanders, or the Burgundian provinces of Spain usually called the Netherlands, was one of the richest parts of Philip's wide dominions, but we have already seen that owing to his oppressive government it was in a constant state of discord. As early as 1566 some of the Netherland nobles had waited on Philip's regent, Margaret of Parma, in order to present her with a list of their grievances. Seeing her shrink away from them,

half-terrified of what their intentions might be, a courtier demanded with a look of contempt in their direction, " Madam, are you afraid of these beggars? " The insult rankled, and at a banquet the following day more than three hundred of the leading men of the Netherlands bound themselves in a league to resist at all costs Philip's introduction of the inquisition into their country. They took the name of " the Beggars " as their title, and a wallet and bowl as their badge of pride.

From this time onwards, though " the Beggars " tried at first to remain loyal to the Spanish King, disaffection and rebellion spread. It was impossible for Protestants to come to terms on religious matters with a ruler who declared " I would lose all my states and one hundred lives if I had them rather than be the lord of heretics." In Holland, or the northern provinces, where there was a large number of Protestants, the bitterness grew so rapidly as a result of persecution that the inhabitants soon ceased to demand merely the redress of grievances and began to insist on complete independence.

By pouring Spanish soldiers into the Netherlands and employing the Duke of Alva, his best general, as military governor, Philip succeeded at last in bringing back the Flemish, or southern,

provinces that were still mainly Catholic into submission, but the Dutch in the north refused to yield. Under the leadership of the Prince of Orange, William " the Silent " as he was called on account of his great discretion, they fought a steady though losing battle from town to town, cutting the dykes and so flooding all the low-lying country in order to prevent the enemy's approach.

As each town was at last captured its population fled. Some thirty thousand weavers crossed the sea and established themselves in the eastern counties of England, where they taught their skilled trade to the people amongst whom they settled. Like the French refugees who had escaped from St. Bartholomew's massacre, they aroused considerable sympathy, and Elizabeth was urged by her subjects to send some assistance to those in the northern provinces of Holland still maintaining their gallant fight for freedom.

Although she was shrewd enough to realize that one of the reasons why Philip II had so far failed to invade England was that he was too busy dealing with Flemish rebels to have the time, army, or funds to spare, Elizabeth hesitated as usual before committing herself to such an act of open hostility. There was the cost to be considered, and then the people of the " United

Netherlands " as they called themselves were, in spite of their heroic sufferings, undoubtedly rebels; while even a series of victories that put Philip's generals utterly to rout might not spell gain or comfort for England as an ally. Elizabeth could never forget that the friendship with France on which she set so much store often held only by a thread. France still kept a very jealous watch on the Channel, and would at once be filled with suspicion and wrath were she to see her ancient enemy established in power on both coasts.

Thus time passed, and for all these reasons the English Queen did no more than remonstrate with Philip on his harsh treatment of his Protestant subjects. " What does it matter to your Majesty," she demanded, " if they go to the devil their own way? " Secretly and grudgingly, however, she paid small sums into the rebels' coffers to prevent their complete overthrow until, at last, two events happened that forced her to take definite action.

In July 1584 William of Orange was assassinated by a Catholic fanatic; while in August of the following year the Spanish Governor, the Prince of Parma, captured from the rebels, now leaderless, their chief port of Antwerp. " May God have pity on my soul and on this poor people," had been the Prince's

dying prayer, for he knew only too well that without prompt assistance " the United Netherlands " he had held together by the power of his name would lie defenceless at the mercy of the Spanish King.

In their despair the Dutch implored Queen Elizabeth to become their ruler; and though she was much too afraid of arousing France's jealousy to consent to this offer, she finally agreed to send an army to Holland under her favourite, the Earl of Leicester. Leicester, who shared the outlook of the younger statesmen at the Queen's council-board, and desired nothing so much as a war with Spain, had long pressed this policy of intervention in the Netherlands on Elizabeth. Yet when he learned she was about to follow his advice his heart misgave him, for he knew from experience how apt his royal mistress was to change her mind. He therefore wrote to Burghley " if her Majesty be not fully persuaded that the cause is of other importance than it were to make a show and become only a scarecrow, it were better never to enter into it." This gloomy foreboding was more than fulfilled.

Elizabeth in her dealings with the Netherlands was seen at her worst, vacillating, bargaining, jealous lest her Lieutenant-General might become too unpopular with the Dutch, and underhand in her negotiations behind his back with

King Philip. " She was no Amazon but a careful housewife," says a modern writer of her conduct at this time; and in truth the waging of war for military glory held little glamour for the English Queen. It was her object to cripple Spanish resources just sufficiently to stave off the threatened invasion of England rather than to win battles for the Dutch; and in this policy she succeeded, though at the price of winning an inglorious reputation as an ally. There is a jeering reference in the Fugger News-Letters, written to that great German banking-house by their agents in Cologne under the year 1586: " The longer the Hollanders and Zeelanders have their English and their Earl of Leicester the less good they do."

The Lieutenant-General of the Forces of Her Majesty, " fifty-four, bald, white-bearded and red-faced," had been welcomed when he first landed in the Netherlands as though he were some Messiah gifted with extraordinary power and influence. But whenever he showed a spark of boldness or independence in his dealings with his allies he was trounced by his Queen like a small schoolboy, being given little chance to prove whether he was really made of better stuff than the self-seeking courtier his enemies believed him. That he was anxious to gain victories is undoubtedly true, for he increased

Elizabeth's stingy contributions to the war-chest out of his private purse, while he spared neither thought nor energy on his task. Unfortunately his military experience was small, while his opponent, the Prince of Parma, was one of the greatest Generals of his day; and soon, as no stirring victories rewarded his efforts, the Dutch became suspicious and contemptuous of his actions. In return Leicester, his nerves frayed by Elizabeth's nagging complaints, gave rein to his overbearing temper and openly denounced his allies as " churls " and " tinkers."

The chief event of the campaign in Holland from the point of view of England's honour was the battle of Zutphen, where five hundred of the flower of her chivalry hurled themselves against the whole forces of the Spanish army. Amongst those who fell was a nephew of Leicester, Sir Philip Sydney, a courtier and poet beloved of all who knew him.

The Lieutenant-General himself was thankful when the Queen at last recalled him to the Court where he might hope to shine again unchidden. After his departure the war in the Netherlands dwindled away into a campaign of " plundering excursions and petty combats "; a calm that did not foreshadow peace but was merely a lull before a wilder storm. Hitherto Philip had seemed as hesitating as Elizabeth save in his determination

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

(*From a Portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*)

PUBLIC

to convert heretics. Now he was convinced that neither in the old world nor the new could there be any rest or safety for his dominions so long as the English Queen, that " woman who keeps no law," was left unpunished. He would have preferred, before undertaking that punishment, to see his rebellious provinces completely subdued, but he realized this might be an affair of years, and in the meantime news had reached him that Mary Queen of Scots, dying at Fotheringay in February 1587, had bequeathed him by will her right to the throne of England. Philip therefore gave secret orders to Parma that he should make ready for an invasion of England, with the coast of Flanders as his jumping-off board.

Centuries later Napoleon Bonaparte, looking at the English Channel, said, " it is a ditch that could be leapt if one were but bold enough to try it." Seated in his palace of the Escorial studying a map, the Spanish King was of the same opinion, and only half believed the Prince of Parma when he pointed out that it might prove a very dirty and uncomfortable ditch in which to fall, and would require a great deal more than mere boldness to cross it in safety.

The King's suggested plan of campaign was that flat-bottomed boats filled with picked troops should, with a favourable wind behind them,

push their way across the Channel, quite unguarded, and force a landing just below the white cliffs of Dover. Parma declared that such orders were impossible to carry out, and finally, in deference to his wishes, Philip consented to send a fleet from Spain for his protection.

Since Spanish faith was placed always in the army rather than the navy, he gave instructions to the Admiral of this Great Armada, the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, that, once he arrived at the Netherlands where he was expected to embark the veterans of the Flemish campaign, he should do as the military authorities told him. The Duke, who was utterly unfitted for his important post, and knew it, was quite ready to accept orders from anyone willing to relieve him of responsibility. A year before, while ships and stores were being collected in the harbour of Cadiz, Drake had appeared and proceeded to sink, burn, and pillage almost unhindered. Medina-Sidonia, then Governor-General of Andalusia, had run away, not that he was a coward, but because he could not imagine how to deal with the crisis.

When, soon after this exploit, the Duke found himself appointed Lord High Admiral of the Armada, he in vain wrote letters of protest to his master, explaining his ignorance of naval matters in general and of the English Channel in

particular. He even made a piteous reference to the fact that he was always sick when he put to sea. Philip would not pay any attention. The Admiral he had chosen was of high birth, he was a very zealous Catholic, above all he was cautious and therefore unlikely to allow anything rash to be attempted by his captains before he drew his squadron under Parma's sheltering wing. For these qualifications his royal master had selected him; and on 12th June 1588 the Armada, delayed for nearly a year by Drake's audacious descent on Spanish harbours, put out to sea under Medina-Sidonia's command. It consisted of 130 large vessels, some 8,000 seamen, and what was all important in Castilian eyes, more than 20,000 soldiers prepared to carry the fiery cross of the Counter-Reformation the length and breadth of England.

In England the preparations were of a very different type. Here was no standing army fit to take the field at once, but hastily collected levies some 70,000 strong, prepared to defend their faith and homes with dogged courage, but obviously no match for Parma's seasoned veterans were the two forces to meet in shock of battle. Elizabeth herself went down to Tilbury to inspect her militia. Riding in armour, attended by a page carrying her white-plumed helmet, and by Leicester whom she had made

Commander-in-Chief of her land forces, she addressed the troops.

Those careful for her safety, she told them, had warned her to beware of treachery: " but I do assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people . . . and therefore I am come among you as you see at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all. . . . I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and of a King of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma, or Spain, or any Prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm."

The ring of conviction was in these words. Bacon tells us " it was not seen that her cheer, her fashion, her ordinary manner was anything altered ": Elizabeth, speaking to her people with the fire of King Harry, her father, whom their fathers had trusted, spoke also for her people in the superb certainty that they were unconquerable. When the greatest of all Elizabethans wrote

> " This England never did nor never shall
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,"

he was not really expressing the views of a half-grown nation in the days of King John, but of

his own age in the glory of its national manhood, whether it was represented by the raw levies gathered at Tilbury, or still more by Drake and his sea-dogs, strong in their knowledge of the winds, Channel, and a foe they had beaten many times in distant waters.

"The English are rejoicing the Spanish Armada is at sea," wrote home a German skipper, who, having sighted the Castilian fleet in the Bay of Biscay, was shortly afterwards brought into Plymouth Harbour by an English vessel, and there spread his news. His statement is in keeping with the well-known tale of Drake refusing to leave off his game of bowls when the Armada was actually sighted because, as he said, "there is time to finish and beat the Spaniards too."

Cheery confidence, rather than the grim courage of a brave man cornered by his foes, represented English naval spirit when the first of the huge Spanish galleons appeared off Penzance; and the pictures that show them towering above a swarm of English cockle-shell boats are apt to convey a false impression of the real strength of the two fleets. No more than his height availed Goliath did the bulk of the Spanish vessels save them from destruction. Their weakness lay in that very fact, even more than in the ignorance of their amiable com-

mander, and made of little account the splendid courage of the men assembled on their decks. The huge Spanish galleons were hopelessly out of date, built on the old mediaeval design of troop-ships instead of as fighting units which should be capable of putting the enemy out of action from a distance without having to board and scuttle him first.

Spanish gunners had received their orders to fire high. The intention was to cripple the ship opposite as a first step towards boarding it, when the real matter would be settled in a hand-to-hand encounter of soldiers rather than sailors. The English fleet, under Lord Howard of Effingham, with Sir Francis Drake as second in command, consisted only of some thirty-four vessels of low tonnage supported by 164 merchant ships and privateers; but it possessed one immense advantage over the Castilian. As a result of the experience gained during dangerous raids on the Spanish-American coasts the English had learned to build a type of ship that " could keep the sea for months, could fire broadsides, and could fight under sail " with marvellous speed and dexterity. Such vessels did not pass stately by like the galleons, waiting to be disabled and boarded according to the enemy's plan, but darted hither and thither, firing their unexpected volleys now from one side now from another.

"The enemy pursue me," wrote Medina-Sidonia despairingly, in the course of a six days' running fight up the Channel to Calais, "they fire upon me from morning to nightfall but they will not grapple although I have given them the opportunity."

It was the victory of modern tactics over those already out of date, and, far from guarding Parma's veterans across "the ditch," the Armada, its finest troops mown down by gunfire on the decks of its huge galleons, some of its vessels sunk, and others in flames, fled to the Netherland ports for protection. Thence, driven from its course and shattered by wind and tempest it drifted into the bleak North Sea. "The Spanish ships are lying up and down the coast like birds without wings," wrote the Dutch. "The English fire without intermission."

Fifty-three galleons, some of them having made their way round the shores of Scotland and Ireland, returned at last to Spain. Philip, forebearing to blame his own judgement in condemning his Lord High Admiral, received Medina-Sidonia graciously. "I have sent you," he said, "to fight with men and not with the elements."

"God blew with His wind and they were scattered," was also inscribed on the coin struck in England to commemorate her great triumph;

but both Queen and people were aware that the victory had already been assured them before the storm arose to complete the work of destruction English seamanship began.

Chapter XI

THE LAST YEARS OF ELIZABETH

"THE Sceptre had passed." This phrase has been used to express the great change produced in Europe by the defeat of the "Invincible Armada." At first news so unexpected was not believed. In Spain joy bells were rung over a false report "that great dog Francis Drake is prisoner with chains and fetters," while in the churches of Rome intercession on behalf of the "Holy Crusade" was offered in high hopes of victory "day and night for forty hours." Then, of a sudden, both bells and prayers ceased. The Spanish ambassador, pressing the Pope for his promised assistance of a million crowns towards the expenses of the expedition, found his demand refused and himself, in his own words, "treated like a negro." The truth had leaked out at last, and even the papal servants were aware that the mighty King Philip of Spain had failed in his scheme of revenge. What was felt to be far worse in Rome was that the forces of the Counter-Reformation had received a definite check.

Henceforward the "United Netherlands" would be free to worship as they chose; while Elizabeth's heretic subjects, besides controlling their Channel, would dominate the Atlantic Highway. Announcing the defeat of the Armada to the head of his firm, one of the Fugger news-agents adds the comment, "this will somewhat abate Spanish insolence and give the English fresh courage: though the English have no lack of insolence either."

In England itself it seemed as if a stormy sky had been cleared by a tremendous thunderstorm, and men could breathe freely again, secure in the safety of their faith and government. Elizabeth, the storm over, would have been glad to make peace, but neither her own subjects nor King Philip shared this desire. Slow to acknowledge the necessity of war, the "Catholic King," once embarked upon his campaign against the race that perpetually insulted his pride and religion, was still slower to acknowledge himself beaten and retire from the fray. Instead of trying to arrange terms he planned a second Armada whose overwhelming triumphs should blot out the disgraceful memory of the first.

English seamen on their part, exulting in their victory, believed that "the command of the seas" they had just acquired meant freedom to loot treasure-ships at their will, and sent out

numberless expeditions into Spanish waters with this object. One of such voyages, that in 1591, brought a small English squadron to the Azores, has been rendered for ever famous by the attack of that "mad little craft," the *Revenge*, under the command of Sir Richard Grenville, on the whole Spanish fleet. Grenville had received orders from his Admiral to escape while there was yet time, but in the words of his friend, Sir Walter Raleigh, "he utterly refused to turn from the enemy, protesting that he would rather die than be guilty of such dishonour to himself, his country, and Her Majesty's ship."

"For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left was seen,
And the little *Revenge* ran on thro' the long sea-lane between.
. . . . . .
Ship after ship the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship the whole night long drew back with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk, and many were shatter'd, and so could fight us no more,
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?"

The courage of Sir Richard Grenville and his crew was magnificent; but his act of bravado

and disobedience cost his country "the only English warship taken in Elizabeth's time"; and gradually our seamen learned from this and similar disasters that the Spaniard was awake to the need of guarding his treasure, and that in consequence too high a price might have to be paid for ocean-robbery in the future. Still aggressive, they planned and carried out raids on the Spanish coasts, and once more burned the shipping that Philip II was laboriously collecting in Cadiz harbour; but these exploits, though they made a great stir in Europe and harassed and embittered the enemy, did not bring in the profits to which Queen and people at first looked forward almost as their just reward.

Thus the years of triumph were also those of partial disappointment, since few Englishmen of this date grasped the fact that a nation wishing to be wealthy must be prepared for hard work, and not count on making her fortune out of the chance spoils of war. In 1583, when Sir Humphrey Gilbert had obtained from Queen Elizabeth a grant giving him the right to establish an English settlement in America, and in 1585 when his half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, made an attempt to plant the colony of Virginia on the Atlantic coast just north of Florida, the first real steps were taken towards building England's future Empire overseas.

Walter Raleigh, like Hawkins and Drake, was Devonshire born and had the love of the sea in his blood, though at first it seemed as if a successful career at Court might swamp all other ambitions. He was " a tall, handsome, and bold man," according to those who saw him, and when he first appeared in the royal presence, bearing despatches from Ireland, at once attracted Elizabeth's notice.

" Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall," wrote the young courtier with a diamond on a window-pane, to which the Queen replied in like manner, " if thy heart fail thee, do not climb at all." Since Raleigh never lacked audacity he accepted the hint, and became an almost indispensable member of the royal circle, remarkable even in that gay assembly for his haughty manner, and the extravagant display of jewels and feathers that marked the Elizabethan man of fashion.

Yet if he could play the popinjay he was not one by nature. His pride and air of aloofness, that won him so many enemies, were partly due to the fact that his mind was often busy weaving dreams far away from the Court. He was a student who even at his busiest would strive to give four hours a day to reading, and, when at sea, would spend his spare time in studying chemistry, or in planning some practical outlet

for his energy as soon as he again put foot on land. From these studies was born a wider view of the opportunities afforded by sea-power than that taken by most of his fellow-adventurers. He desired for his Queen "a better Indies than the King of Spain hath any"; and in 1595 went on a voyage to Guiana, hoping that he would discover "El Dorado," the fabulous "land of gold" of which Indians often spoke. In this he failed, to Elizabeth's disgust, but was delighted himself with the fertile soil and lovely views. "It is a country that hath yet her maidenhood," he wrote, and described "the river [Orinoco] winding into different branches, plains without bush or stubble all fair green grass, deer crossing our path, birds towards evening singing on every tree. . . ."

A new England across the ocean built on hard work and enthusiasm; such was Raleigh's dream. It was not the "get rich quick at someone else's expense" ideal that the sixteenth century favoured, and his three attempts to found a colony led only to the return of disillusioned settlers, though the tobacco and potatoes they brought with them were to win the pioneer of colonization another kind of fame. Almost as well known as the gorgeous cloak which he threw in the mud for Elizabeth to walk upon is the silver tobacco pipe which he was

smoking on the day when a frightened servant " put him out " with a bucket of water.

Raleigh was one of a new generation of courtiers who in the last half of the reign began to replace the gallants with whom, in earlier years, Elizabeth had danced and flirted. Her " sweet Robin " had died within a few months of the Armada victory, and was succeeded in her favour by his handsome stepson, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.

Thirty-four years younger than the Queen, Essex was clever, enthusiastic, and adventurous. He possessed just those qualities in fact that in the Elizabethan age spelt success; and men prophesied when he was made " Master of the Horse," that he " was like enough if he had a few more years to carry Leicester's credit and sway." Unfortunately for himself he lacked the suave caution that had so often saved his stepfather when Elizabeth was in one of her difficult and wayward moods. It was for such moods that jealous rivals of the reigning favourite lay in wait in order to poison her mind against him; and Essex was so reckless in his speech and actions that he offered them every chance to prove him self-seeking and worthless.

Generous to his friends he was a bitter foe. He had always hated Burghley, who was now an old man, and his crafty son, Robert Cecil, who

was gradually absorbing all the business of State in his own hands, and he did not hesitate to tell the world so, denouncing the one as a fox and the other as a knave. He would also boast freely of his intention of bringing about their downfall, talking as though he were the ruler of England with a right to order this and that.

Spoiled by Elizabeth, who loved him with an old woman's delight in the beauty and daring of youth, Essex did not realize that the many gifts with which she flattered his vanity were more than his services deserved. When, some years before, Leicester, presuming on similar condescension, had dared to threaten with dismissal one of the royal attendants, and the man had appealed to Elizabeth, she had told the Earl in an outburst of offended dignity, " God's death! My lord! I have wished you well, but my favour is not so locked up in you as others shall not participate thereof. . . . I will have here but one mistress and no master."

Leicester had the wisdom to learn the lesson that here in Elizabeth were two persons in one, Woman and Queen. The woman could be kind, gentle, and even generous, as well as cruel, fickle, and exacting. A witty answer or well-feigned humility might turn aside her wrath, a lover's eagerness dazzle her, high-spirited impatience or even defiance gracefully atoned for gain her pardon; but behind the woman, variable as any

other human being, was the implacable Queen. " When they have done their extreme duty," it was said of Elizabeth and her ministers in her own day, " she wills what she wills." This is the true picture of Tudor royalty, of King Harry's daughter, of the Majesty of England who " held herself answerable to none for her actions save to Almighty God."

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, brought about his own ruin because he failed to recognize, or at least acknowledge, the Queen in the woman who spoiled him. Pettish or broodingly sullen if he were crossed, he had neither the self-control to conceal his anger when he was snubbed for his insolence, nor the good sense to take the chances of amendment that Elizabeth, with unwonted patience, offered him.

A last chance to prove his worth was given him in Ireland, which, as usual in Tudor times, was in a state of seething rebellion. Like other nations of the day, it seldom occurred to England to consider her government from the point of view of the races she conquered. Although utterly alien in blood, customs, and outlook, the Celt was expected to fit comfortably into the Anglo-Saxon mould, and when he most uncomfortably failed to do so, he was regarded as an outcast and rebel to be kept in order by fire and sword.

" I judge them enemies rather than subjects,"

wrote an English statesman of the Irish in 1577; and the history of Ireland at this time may be summed up as a series of rebellions and reprisals separated by periods of exhaustion during which both sides gathered up strength for fresh acts of aggression. In Dublin, and for the few miles round that city commonly called "the Pale," English law and authority were acknowledged by the inhabitants; while beyond lay huge tracts of country under the control either of Celtic chiefs or of Anglo-Irish lords such as the Geraldines, tracing their descent from the first Norman settlers.

Sometimes these Anglo-Irish lords, engaged in feuds with neighbouring clans, were willing to pay outward deference to England and even to visit her Court: on other occasions they snapped their fingers at the Lord Deputy and the crown he represented, raided the royal arsenals for guns and ammunition, and maintained an independent and semi-royal pomp on their own estates.

The Celtic chiefs, who lived in the South and West, kept to themselves as far as possible, regarding both their foreign conquerors and the descendants of the Norman invaders who had seized their lands with sullen distrust. To the average Tudor Englishman they appeared savages. Even their princes or kings wore little

more than breeches of rough hide beneath long mantles, their palaces were thatched hovels, their staple food and drink bread, butter, and sour milk, while their property consisted mainly of herds of cattle and sheep. To preserve these flocks or increase them, every chief fought his neighbours with unfailing zest and energy.

Philip and Mary had attempted to check this state of tribal warfare by planting settlers in that part of the country called after them King's County and Queen's County, but only succeeded in producing worse confusion. Such outposts of English civilization were bitterly resented by the native Irish who, driven away into the bogs and mountain fastnesses, would creep back in small bands at nightfall to murder stray settlers and fire their homesteads. In their turn the settlers would reply by punitive expeditions until the original feud grew into a campaign of extermination, which was further embittered as the years passed by religious differences.

Both Henry VIII and Edward VI had failed in their efforts to make the Reformation take any real root in Ireland, that, save for a small minority, remained entirely Catholic in its beliefs and sympathies. Thus, when Philip II was looking round for a new weapon to use in his duel with Elizabeth, his thoughts turned naturally to the Catholic Irish, who already hated the English

Government. While the heretic Queen of England was secretly encouraging Dutch burghers in their resistance to his rule, he himself sent priests to stir up a religious war amongst the Catholics of Munster and the West of Ireland, and encouraged risings in which the longing for freedom was kept at fever-heat by the bitterness of a persecuted faith.

"The history of Ireland during the reign of Elizabeth," it has been said, "is the most melancholy page in the life of the great Queen." Determined to reduce the whole land to English law and order, she brought to this task none of the imagination and insight that marked her dealings with her own country. In truth, she was not interested in a race so wild and barbaric. That much of the responsibility for the poverty and discontent of the Irish rested with their rulers was not an idea likely to enter the head of an English monarch at that time. Yet it is difficult for us now to read without shame and pity the poet Spenser's account of the famine-stricken population of Munster after the punishment meted out to that province for its rebellion of 1579. "Out of every corner of the wood and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs would not bear them: they looked like anatomies of death, they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves."

Thirty thousand men, women, and children were said to have perished, mostly of starvation, and the acres they left desolate were sold to courtiers and speculators with the intention of planting them with colonists from England. This experiment failed, since the sturdy, hard-working English farmer, who might have made it a success, was not sufficiently attracted by what he had heard of Ireland to run the risk of finding a dart or " skean " in his ribs some dark night. " The eagles of enterprise spread their wings for the Spanish Main, the vultures swooped upon Ireland," and those who crossed the Channel, hoping to make their fortunes, were chiefly needy adventurers of the cut-throat type.

In 1598, the province of Ulster, under the leadership of its chief, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, having flamed into rebellion, a royalist force of some 5,000 men was defeated near the river Blackwater, and its commander, Sir Henry Bagenall, killed. This was by far the most serious reverse English arms had yet suffered in Ireland during the reign; and Elizabeth, terrified lest the King of Spain, hearing of it, should forthwith land enough troops there to enable the rebels to achieve independence, at once despatched an army to deal with the crisis.

The real problem proved to be the choice of a suitable Commander-in-Chief, for, when possible

names were discussed at the Council board, the Earl of Essex raised an objection to each in turn. Presuming on his popularity with the nation, he had been growing very high-handed in his dealings with the old Queen of late, and now dared, when she disagreed with him, to turn his back on her in a fit of petulance. Elizabeth's anger was roused by this impertinence. Bidding him "Go and be hanged!" she soundly boxed his ears; whereupon the young man was with difficulty restrained from drawing his sword, and, still in a fit of sulks, quitted the royal presence. What was to be done with Essex? What was to be done with Ireland? The Queen, exasperated with her favourite, and anxious at the minute only to be rid of him, solved both problems with the same answer. Since he objected to every name raised at the Council board, let Robert Devereux himself go to Ireland and try his hand as both General and Governor.

Here was the life of adventure that Essex had always craved, the chance moreover to regain the good opinion of his royal mistress by some display of military genius; but the new Lord Deputy let it slip, not merely through bad generalship but by deliberately disobeying the orders with which he had been sent from home. After losing half his forces in a futile campaign in the South, where the rebellion was only

flickering feebly, he at last turned North to meet the main body of the insurgents under the Earl of Tyrone. His orders were to enforce submission at the point of the sword. Instead he agreed to a truce and held out promises to the Irish chief of pardon and the restoration of his lands.

Elizabeth, when she learned what had been settled behind her back, was furious, for she was in no mood for mercy. " As regards the rebels of Ireland," she told the French ambassador, " it was not my intention to pardon them: that was the idea of Monsieur of Essex, and I will show him that he had no power to do it: and had a son of mine committed such a fault I would have put him in the highest tower in England."

Reports of her growing anger reached the Lord Deputy's camp. Rash as ever, Essex, persuaded that his rivals, Robert Cecil and Raleigh, were secretly poisoning the Queen's mind against him, threw up his command and returned to England. Still in his riding clothes, travel-stained and unkempt, he forced his way into the Queen's presence, and in words that were half entreaty, half bluster, tried to protest his innocence and assure her of his devotion. At first he seemed successful, and Elizabeth, a bewildered old woman, was moved to pity by his obvious anxiety; but as soon as the door

closed behind him, her mood changed to that of outraged majesty, and she remembered only his disobedience and folly. Walking up and down her room she exclaimed in paroxysms of rage, "I am no Queen. That man is above me. Who gave him command to come here so soon? I did send him on other business."

The enemies of Essex were not slow to seize such an opportunity. On their advice he was arrested and kept in strict confinement, yet there remained a loophole of escape. Somewhere in Elizabeth's heart there was a soft spot for this reckless young man, and time would probably have revealed it, but Essex could not wait. Released from prison he chafed that he was still in disgrace, an exile from the Court, and so began to plot and scheme the overthrow of those he held responsible for his fall. In February of the year 1601 he rashly ventured his fate in the most futile of all Tudor rebellions. At the head of some three hundred armed followers he rode through the streets of London calling on its citizens to join him and rid the Court of treacherous ministers.

"For the Queen! For the Queen!" rose his shout of defiance against his enemies, the Cecil faction, but the Queen had not bidden him come to her rescue, and the crowd knew it, and for all his popularity let him pass in silence. Again he

was arrested, this time an actual rebel-in-arms. When he was brought to trial on a charge of high treason there was found amongst his papers correspondence with the Scottish King that bore out this accusation, and Essex, self-ruined, was sent to the scaffold. " I would gladly have been lenient," Elizabeth told the French ambassador a short time after his death, " but you yourself have seen he was unworthy; and while he lived I could not live. . . . I warned him more than three years before his execution . . . that he should be careful not to touch my sceptre lest I should be compelled to punish him according to the laws of England and not according to my own."

The Queen had passed judgement and felt she could not have done otherwise; but the old woman who was Elizabeth's second self long mourned the loss of her brilliant young favourite, though not so deeply as she had the passing, in August 1598, of her ever faithful servant William Cecil, Lord Burghley. " My comfort has been in my people's happiness and their happiness in thy discretion," she wrote to him during his last illness, and when they came and told her he was dead, she " wept and withdrew herself from all company."

The young men who surrounded her at Court were supple, gallant, and charming as of old.

They did not fail to pay her " perennial beauty " the compliments in which she had once delighted, but the flavour of their flattery was gone. Even Burghley's son, the smooth-tongued little hunchback, Robert Cecil, on whom she must now depend for his father's services, was calculating, she guessed, the exact hour of her death and how best he might ingratiate himself with her successor.

During the last years of the reign this question of who should succeed Elizabeth on the throne of England was the one that most exercised men's minds. The Queen herself steadily snubbed both ministers and Parliament whenever they dared to introduce the subject. In the words of the Spanish ambassador, " she on no account desires the declaration of a successor and tells those who speak to her about it that she does not want anyone to whom her subjects could go secretly and offer their devotion as they came to her when she was a prisoner."

By the terms of Henry VIII's will her legal successor should have been one of the Suffolk line, descended from his younger sister, the Duchess Mary; but when early in the reign Philip II, presuming on this, began to intrigue with Lady Catharine Grey, Elizabeth at once clapped her cousin into the safe-keeping of the Tower, where she remained till her death.

Later, in her old age, Elizabeth committed herself to the opinion, " my throne has always been the throne of kings, and none but my next of heir and blood shall succeed." Her subjects, few of whom could remember King Harry or still held his will as Gospel, interpreted this announcement rightly enough as a reference to Mary Stuart's son James VI of Scotland, and began to pay him secret homage. The old star for all its brilliance was on the wane, and the new star rising.

The young generation that sent its representatives to Parliament was composed of men of a different type and outlook from the last, an independent, argumentative set of fellows, bred in the midst of Catholic plots and a war with Spain that made their sympathies wholly Protestant. With their religious views Elizabeth had almost nothing in common. Determined on the " middle road " she had laid down in the Church settlement at the beginning of her reign, she endeavoured by means of a " Court of High Commission " to make the extreme Puritan sects that had sprung up during the last ten years or so conform to the established order. When they refused, the " Court of High Commission " inflicted sentences of fines, imprisonment, and even death under which many men of good and austere lives suffered.

" Leave that ungodly digression and return to your text," Elizabeth had once with Tudor arrogance addressed a Dean of St. Paul's in his pulpit before his whole congregation. The growing independence of judgement and speech that she found on all sides and on all matters amongst her subjects filled her with misgiving for the future. Yet, if too old to adapt herself to the ways of a new world according to her ideas " stubborn and perverse," Elizabeth's common sense usually warned her when it would be foolish to pit her will against the nation's.

In 1601, having granted to some of her more favoured courtiers the sole right to sell certain articles of commerce such as wines, she withdrew this " monopoly," as it was called, in face of the storm of opposition it aroused in Parliament, covering her surrender with gracious words. " Had I not received a knowledge from you," she told the Commons, " I might have fallen into the lap of error for a lack of true information." Such tact closed many a dawning rift between Queen and people; yet in truth it was not so much tact as love that kept, as it had won, her people's trust and affection.

" Be always faithful to me as I always desire to keep you in peace," she said in one of her last public speeches. " If there have been wiser Kings, none has ever loved you more than I

have." These words express her character and policy at their highest. They vindicate her claim to the title given her half a century after her death by Oliver Cromwell, " Queen Elizabeth of famous memory."

When on 24th March 1603, in the seventieth year of her age, and forty-fourth of her reign, she passed away, her subjects mourned her with a very real sorrow, in the consciousness that one of earth's master-spirits had been taken from them. " The City of Westminster," on the day of her burial in Westminster Abbey, " was surcharged with multitudes of all sorts of people, in the streets, houses, windows, leads, and gutters . . . and when they beheld her statue or effigy lying on the coffin set forth in royal robes . . . there was such a general sighing, groaning, and weeping as the like hath not been seen or known in the memory of man, neither doth any history mention any people, time, or state, to make like lamentation for the death of their sovereign."

Chapter XII

ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

A MODERN writer has described the Elizabethan and Victorian ages as standing like "twin peaks of civilization" above the rest of English history. With Victoria we are not concerned here, but it is interesting to consider the reign of Elizabeth in the light of this statement. Politically, we have already noticed that England under her great Queen attained to a height of independence and importance of which the victor of Bosworth would hardly have dared to dream; but, since civilization is not just a matter of winning battles and founding an empire, we are led to ask how far the life of the country during these years, from 1485 to 1603, kept pace with other changes. Her government had grown up: socially was she still the half-civilized land of evil-smelling towns, and of a countryside poor in agriculture and wealthy only in bogs and heathland, that foreign visitors had remarked in the reign of the first Tudor king?

"Britain," says an Elizabethan historian, "is

. . . well-known to be the most flourishing and excellent, most renowned and famous isle of the whole world, so rich in commodities, so beautiful in situation, so resplendent in all glory, that if the most Omnipotent had fashioned this round world like a ring, as He did like a globe, it might have been most worthily the only gem therein." This modest estimate of his country's attractions we must compare with other more detailed descriptions by fellow writers of his day.

Travellers, we notice, still found the roads almost impassable in places from holes and overhanging trees; and so preferred to ride on horseback rather than in the massive lumbering coaches that had lately made their appearance in the large towns. Carriers now plied between city and city in long covered wagons; " but this kind of journeying is so tedious as none but women, and people of the inferior condition, or strangers . . . use to travel in that sort." Yet the fact that such a regular system of transport had become customary was a sign of progress. No longer the feudal baron, safe himself behind moat and drawbridge, could sally forth with his retainers to harass the countryside; his castles, except along the wild Welsh and Scottish borders, were falling into ruins. Instead were rising, amid well-kept parks and gardens bright with flowers, beautiful timbered manor-houses built in the

new red brick, possessing no more substantial protection than a sunny orchard wall.

In the villages, nestling close around their church and manor after the English fashion, were still the insanitary thatched cottages, each with their little patch of garden-ground; but even agriculture, thanks to experiments in manuring, had begun to improve. Gardens of any size, too, were being sown with crops of vegetables hitherto unknown, or that had been neglected by careless housekeepers for more than a century. Here were potatoes from the New World, "thicke, fat, and tuberous . . . their knobbie rootes fastened with stalkes with an infinite number of threddie stringes," as well as gourds, artichokes, cucumbers, radishes, and parsnips. As dishes for dessert we read of apricots, melons, currants, and strawberries.

"The soil," says Harrison, a country clergyman to whom we owe a great deal of our intimate knowledge of Elizabethan England, "had grown to be more fruitful, and the countrymen more painful, more careful, and more skilful for recompense of gain." Beans, peas, and oats were usual substitutes for white bread with the very poor; but as early as the reign of Mary a Spaniard, visiting this island, had been amazed by the good food enjoyed by quite ordinary folk in contrast to conditions in his own country.

" Their houses," he said, " are made of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonly as well as the King."

Of the upper classes Harrison tells us, " sith there is no day that passeth over their heads wherein they have not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, cony, capon, pig, or as many of these as the season yieldeth, but also some portion of the red or fallow deer, besides great variety of fish and wildfowl." A work entitled *The English Housewife*, published early in the seventeenth century, after dealing with the provision to be made for impressive banquets, suggests for " the more humble feast or ordinary proportion " that there should be at least " sixteen dishes of meat that are of substance and not empty or for show."

Dinner, a prolonged meal of many courses, from which we are not surprised to learn guests found it hard to rise, was usually at eleven, or in the case of merchants and farmers, at noon; supper between five and six in the evening. Only children, invalids, or early risers were expected to indulge in a third meal.

A little starvation would have been a reasonable prescription for most invalids of the period; but medicine had not kept pace with the growth of comfort; and visits from the Elizabethan doctor, if his advice were accepted, must fre-

quently have been followed by those of the undertaker. "Take up earth that is well-trodden within a door: make a cake of it with vinegar, toast it, and clap it hot to your side," is a widely recommended cure for stitch. Salt of gold or so many grains of powdered pearls or coral were favourite medicines at the Court, esteemed we suspect largely on account of their price; and Elizabeth never showed her common sense more shrewdly than in refusing to have anything to do with these quackeries. "Abstinence is the better part of physic," was a proverb of her own invention, and since she was frequently attacked by severe illness in the course of her life, it is probable that she recovered and lived to a hale old age both by moderation in food and drink and by making it a practice to disobey her doctor's orders. Like most people of her day, however, she was very fond of sweetmeats, and indulgence in them early blackened her teeth, and may have accounted for the pale complexion in later years that ladies of the Court loyally tried to imitate by swallowing a mixture of gravel, ashes, and tallow.

It is natural then that the number of men and women who died in proportion to the population was large in Tudor times, though this can be accounted for also by the frequent visitations of

the plague, especially in London and the principal towns where no real steps were taken to deal with dirt and infection. The ordinary Elizabethan was probably proof against most disorders save these epidemics; and unless he belonged to the steadily growing sect of Puritans, enjoyed life with a zest for amusement and love of luxury that shocked an elder and more careful generation.

Harrison, for one, was afraid the increase of comfort would "eat out the hardihood of the people." Some of the changes, he tells us, that the old men of his day most frequently remarked were "one the multitude of chimneys lately erected . . . the second is the great . . . amendment of lodging; for our fathers . . . have lain full oft upon straw pallets . . . and a good round log under their heads . . . the third they tell of is the exchange of vessel as of wooden platters into pewter."

We smile to-day at the idea that such necessaries of modern life as mattresses and pillows would be likely to produce a race of weaklings; but the Elizabethan shook his head in grave dismay. "When our houses were builded of willow then had we oaken men; but now our houses are come to be made of oak our men are not only become willow but a great many altogether of straw which is a sore alteration. Now have we

many chimneys, and yet our tenderlings complain of rheums."

Perhaps it was only an old man's passing grumble at the folly of the young; for Harrison was impressed as well as alarmed by the general display of wealth and comfort, whether it was shown in octagonal chimneys, in richly ornamented furniture, in tapestry hangings on the walls, in carpets instead of noisome rushes on the floors, or in the use of glass in windows where before there had been wooden lattice-work or panels made of horn.

He is careful to point out that such improvements belonged not merely to the large manor-houses, but in a lesser degree to farms and inns. The latter, since the destruction of the monasteries had swept away the most popular form of rest-house, had increased in importance. Harrison says they were well furnished with " napery, bedding, and tapestry," and according to other writers they had only two serious drawbacks. Fleas were one, and the other that their servants were often in league with the bands of highwaymen who, in spite of improved law and order, haunted the outskirts of London and the more lonely parts of the main roads.

In his play, *Henry IV*, Shakespeare makes Gadshill, a member of Falstaff's rascally band, come to the Inn Yard at Rochester to spy out the

prospects of a satisfactory highway robbery for his master. He boasts to the Chamberlain of the inn that he is " joined with no foot land-rakers . . . but with nobility." " Good-morrow, Master Gadshill," says the Chamberlain, " it holds current that I told you yesternight: there's a Franklin in the wilds of Kent hath brought three hundred marks with him in gold. I heard him tell it to one of his company last night at supper . . . they will away presently."

On this information a bargain is struck. " Give me thy hand," says Gadshill, " thou shalt have a share in our purchase as a true man." The Chamberlain answers racily, " Nay, rather let me have it as you are a false thief."

Lower in the grade of rascality than the professional highwayman, though often destined for the same hangman's rope, was the beggar, the standing menace to the domestic peace of Tudor times. We have seen already how his type was bred by the sudden increase of unemployment which followed the destruction of the religious houses, and by the too rapid change of arable land into pasturage. He emerged from these conditions for the most part an irresponsible, furtive creature, living by his wits, with no stake in the country, and so only too ready to prey on its weakness or credulity, his hand against every man as every man's hand was against him.

Harrison declared that in his time there were some ten thousand beggars on the road " counterfeiting the possession of all sorts of diseases " in order to excite pity, " seeking for ships they never lost . . . abhorring all labour and every honest exercise." He is careful, however, to make a distinction between such lazy rogues and the poor who from illness, youth, or age, were unable to work. The fact that in doing so he was no longer a solitary voice crying in the wilderness like Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia*, but the mouthpiece of educated Elizabethan opinion, shows us another direction in which England had of late made solid progress. She had grown the rudiments of a public conscience.

Called on to deal with the problem of unemployment, Henry VIII's Government had passed a brutal law " that every able-bodied beggar should be tied to the end of a cart, naked, and be beaten with whips," while it had done nothing at all to provide for the sick and elderly whom the destruction of the monasteries and convents, and later the confiscation of guild funds, left stranded by the wayside.

Edward VI's clergy appealed to their wealthier parishioners to show charity to their poorer neighbours; but it was left to Elizabeth and her Parliaments to appoint officials who would secure " suitable habitations for the impotent

and aged," and would find work for the able-bodied unemployed, the necessary funds being raised by taxation in each parish. This was a great improvement on the indifference of earlier days; and the Poor Law of 1601 remained as the basis of future legislation of the same kind right into the nineteenth century.

It was fortunate that the Overseers of the Poor started on their work during a period not of trade depression, but of increasing industry and commerce. Though the boom in sheep-farming had begun to decline, English wool was still in great demand on the Continent as well as in many of the large towns at home, where factories for making cloths, silks, satins, and fustians, had been set up largely under the inspiration of Protestant refugees from France and Holland.

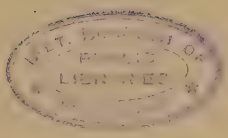
Norwich was a centre of the stocking industry. When Elizabeth, on one of her royal progresses, visited that city she was shown among other scenes of a pageant, young girls seated on a platform knitting. Afterwards she was presented with a silver cup filled with gold pieces, a gift very much to her thrifty mind, and must listen to a recitation ending with these words:

"Thus, through thy help and aid of power divine
Doth Norwich live whose hearts and goods are thine."

The speech expressed the understanding be-

tween Queen and people. Other rulers of England had been popular for the naval and military victories achieved during their reigns, but it was for more than the triumph of the Armada that the last Tudor sovereign was loved and respected by her subjects. Like Henry VII it was her instinct to encourage and protect the growth of industrial life. When the fishing trade languished because Protestants had begun to eat meat in Lent and on Fridays, the Queen ordered her subjects to observe two fast days a week in order to revive it. Like her father, she encouraged English shipbuilding. Through the grant of royal charters she helped to found Merchant Companies of which the most famous, the East India Company, was to lay the foundation of a British Empire overseas.

In 1570 Elizabeth drove in state through London to open the Royal Exchange that had just been built by Sir Thomas Gresham as a meeting-place for English and foreign merchants. Hitherto they had transacted their business for the most part in the open air; and now they had this grand building with its galleries for the display of goods of all nations, and its large hall where the princes of commerce could talk and bargain. The Royal Exchange was in itself a proof that England was becoming the mistress of the seas and the commercial centre of Europe.



THE SOUTHWARK GATE OF LONDON BRIDGE, 1616

(*By permission of the C.U.P.*)

London, the capital, was increasing rapidly in size and population. To-day we should think its narrow winding streets, the upper storeys of the timbered houses projecting so far that in places they shut out the daylight from the passing crowd below, poor enough for a city though picturesque. Yet it must have been a gay and fascinating scene to watch, with nobles strolling along in tall hats, stiff ruffs, and padded satins and velvets; their ladies equally gorgeous in their wide-hooped skirts. Liveried servants, carrying swords, vainly endeavoured to prevent humbler folk in cloth and fustian from soiling such magnificence. Apprentices in their flat caps, and bawling street vendors, jostled past them quite indifferent to threats and curses.

The main thoroughfare of the capital for all purposes was still the Thames. Every kind of craft passed up and down its stream from the tapestry-hung barges of the Queen and her courtiers to the little ferry-boats that plied between the north and south banks. A great part of the population of London supported itself by means of river-traffic, whether as sailors, pilots, dock-labourers, or as watermen "evermore telling strange news, most commonly lies" to amuse and horrify their passengers.

He was a rough fellow, this waterman, it seemed. "The playhouses only kept him sober,"

says a writer of the time, adding " London Bridge is the most terrible eyesore to him that can be." Besides drawing away some of his possible customers, he was able, as he looked up at the roof of the guard-house on the bridge-end, to see the heads of criminals stuck on pikes as a warning of the direful fate of evil-doers.

The Elizabethan age was not soft-hearted. Ordinary law-abiding citizens stared at this hideous spectacle quite unmoved as they hurried across the river to watch the cruel sport of bear-baiting in Southwark, one of the popular amusements on a London holiday. In Southwark were also lately erected theatres such as " The Globe." Pictures of the day show us the outside of these great round buildings, and inside a stage stretching far out into the central unroofed space where " groundlings " of the pit could study from all sides the movements of their favourite actors. Middle-class citizens of comfortable means would sit in the covered galleries that ran round the theatre, and with them, or on sixpenny stools on the stage itself, Court gallants, languidly interrupting the performance with their comments, or carrying on a war of words with the crowd below.

The plays presented in these theatres were in keeping with the taste of the time. In old days, when actors had performed in the halls of

universities or palaces, or outside churches, they had suited their matter to their audience, providing the educated with masques and classical imitations, poor folk with miracle plays or representations of national life in the past.

From these, some of them very primitive beginnings, sprang the real drama of the Elizabethan theatre, often crude and brutal like the deeds of the seamen of that day, but glorious with the same vitality and zest for adventure.

" Enter Tamburlaine, drawn in his chariot by the Kings of Trebizon and Soria with bits in their mouths, reins in his left hand, and in his right a whip with which he scourgeth them." These are the stage directions in one scene of Christopher Marlowe's play *Tamburlaine the Great*. Elizabethan playgoers dearly loved to see a villain or a tyrant. They delighted in horrors; and Marlowe, who shared their taste, gave them battlefields, shattered empires, kings in chains or cages, and sacked and burning towns.

Other dramatists of the day did the same; but while their melodramas have been forgotten save as literary curiosities, Marlowe's plays still live and thrill us with their " high-astounding terms." He was both poet and playwright, in his writings like himself often violent and exaggerated yet brilliant with the fire of genius ever urging him towards greater literary heights. We can mark

his progress in the succession of his chief plays from the immense, ill-framed *Tamburlaine* to *Edward II* that has been called "the first well-conceived and solidly built tragedy in English literature."

The best known of his works is *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, that retells the old legend of the German scholar who, in order to obtain knowledge, power, and pleasure, sold himself to the Devil, repenting of his bargain when it was too late.

"He that loves pleasure must for pleasure fall,
And so I leave thee, Faustus"

mocks his evil Angel, when there is but one hour left to run of Faustus' human life. In the agony of his realization that he has sacrificed what was priceless for dross, the Doctor cries aloud:

"Let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul! . . .
Oh, I'll leap up to Heaven!—Who pulls me down?
See, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop of blood will save me: . . .
Oh, if my soul must suffer for my sin
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be saved!"

For lines such as these, that in beauty and insight equal Shakespeare's, Marlowe will always be remembered; but his career as a playwright was too short to show the heights to which he might have attained. It lasted only six years, for in 1593, at the age of twenty-nine, he was killed in a tavern brawl, leaving the stage free to the greatest of English dramatists.

Shakespeare, it has been said, wrote " not for an age but for all time." In a sense this is, of course, true; and libraries can hardly contain all the books that have been written to prove and illustrate this statement. In another sense the son of the Warwickshire grazier was as much the child of his day as Marlowe.

Compelled for some reason to leave his home in Stratford-on-Avon, the young countryman is supposed to have made his first acquaintance with the theatre world by holding horses outside the doors. Later, he found his way into the pit; and then, since " he was a handsome well shap't man: very good company and of a very ready, pleasant, smooth wit," on to the stage itself, where he was to gain the practical experience for his future craft of play-writing.

It was not because he had a multitude of inspired thoughts to utter that the actor sat down to the tedious task of putting words on paper. It was because his Manager demanded some-

thing new to produce, and, turning over old pages of other men's efforts, Master William Shakespeare realized of a sudden that these dead bones could be made to live again and set himself to blow the breath of life into them. There are horrors in many of Shakespeare's plays as in Marlowe's for he was a practical man and his audience demanded them; but when he came to deal with the ordinary plots of his day, he found he could not rest content with what was only crude and violent. The tragedies of *Romeo and Juliet*, of *Macbeth*, and of *Hamlet*, that written by another hand might have been merely gruesome, come to a new and very wonderful life under his pen. As his characters move about the stage we learn to know them so intimately that we do not just see them walk and speak fine words, but understand what they are feeling and thinking almost as though they were ourselves.

That is the perfection of dramatic art, though not all Elizabethan playgoers, any more than theatre audiences to-day, were capable of appreciating the highest when they saw it. In contrast to *Tamburlaine*, or some of the easily understood plays of the poet-dramatist, Ben Jonson, that caricatured the life of his day, much of Shakespeare's lighter or more subtle passages must have seemed puzzling stuff indeed.

That he was great, this playwright-fellow from

Warwickshire, all were agreed, but how great was not realized until long after his death in 1616. The plays that were most applauded by his earliest audiences were the historical dramas, setting forth England's triumphs, or " Merry Tales " of comic adventures that befell such heroes as the " immortal Falstaff." Tradition holds that Queen Elizabeth delighted so heartily in this fat rogue that she expressed her desire to see him in love; and that Shakespeare, hearing this, at once sat down to write *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and had it staged for a special production at the Court.

" It is not the least debt we owe to history," wrote Sir Walter Raleigh, " that it hath made us acquainted with our dead ancestors, and out of the depth and darkness of the earth delivered us their memory and fame." Theatre audiences, that in real life still mourned indignantly the loss of Calais, shouted patriotic applause, as on the stage they watched that high-hearted adventurer, Henry V, once more conquer the fair fields of France and woo its princess with careless ease.

" Now all the youth of England are on fire
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies."

Men lately returned from fighting the Spaniards in the New World or narrow Straits of Dover

thrilled to the message in such words and still more to that thoroughly English appeal:

" The game's afoot!
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and St. George!' "

If Shakespeare " wrote for all time " he wrote also most assuredly for his own day, and that is why we hold him the greatest of Elizabethans. His plays are full of quotations and allusions that show he knew the writings of classical authors, at least in translation, as well as such works of English history as *Holinshed's Chronicles*; but they contain even more reference to popular romances, songs, ballads, and jests of the day. From these we can picture him jostling shoulder against shoulder with the crowds in the London streets, or exchanging witty stories and gossip in the " Mermaid " tavern with fellow playwrights and actors.

By law, Elizabethan actors belonged to that large section of the public labelled " rogues and vagabonds." The Puritans of the kingdom would gladly have set them in the stocks and then whipped them home to follow a more sober trade, but they escaped such penalties by enrolling themselves in " Companies " under the patronage and protection of one of the great nobles of the Court.

It was the fashion at this time, when the Renaissance study of classical and foreign writers had at last borne fruit in England, for anyone who wished to be considered a man or woman of taste to take a marked interest in literature, whether drama, poetry, history, or essay writing. Thus, while Essex was a patron of the theatre whose fall filled Southwark with dismay, Sydney, Spenser, Raleigh, and Sir Francis Bacon were all poets or prose-writers as well as distinguished courtiers or state officials.

Sir Philip Sydney we have mentioned already as the nephew of Leicester, mortally wounded on the battlefield of Zutphen. As a very gallant soldier his memory still lingers to-day; but to his contemporaries he was a great deal more than this. He was the central figure of the Court. He summed up in his person and acts the mediaeval ideal of chivalry still honoured in Tudor times as the essence of all true breeding and education.

" At the birth of Sydney all the muses met," wrote Ben Jonson, and the admiration felt for Shakespeare's " sugared " sonnets was as nothing to the enthusiasm aroused by the works of the young courtier-poet who wrote so charmingly of his love for " Stella " and of the gentle dalliance of shepherds and shepherdesses. Perhaps the greater part of his charm lay even then in the gracious manner of his life and death. It is

otherwise with his friend and fellow poet, Edmund Spenser, the value of whose work is quite independent of his character or career.

Sydney's influence had obtained for Spenser, in 1580, the post of secretary to Lord Grey de Wilton, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, just when threats of rebellion and of Spanish invasion were at their most ominous. The practical services he rendered the Government on this occasion secured him as a reward a substantial grant of confiscated land.

In his *View of the State of Ireland*, from which we have already quoted in connection with the Munster Rebellion, we see one side of this experience, the critical survey that a man of letters anxious to display his ability and powers of observation would naturally write. The other side is less natural unless we remember that Spenser, in exile and far from the friends with whom he loved to discuss ideas, would be apt to let his imagination wander in strange lands in search of comfort for his home-sickness.

Sir Walter Raleigh, visiting the south of Ireland in 1589, came to Youghal ; and there, seated by the poet's glowing peat-fire, listened enthralled to the earlier books of the *Faerie Queen*. Quick to recognize their genius, he brought both book and author to Elizabeth's notice, and their fame soon spread abroad.

Spenser himself talked of this work as an allegory, in which the principal characters illustrated such virtues or qualities as truth, beauty, etc.; but the explanation cannot be pushed far without confusion arising, nor indeed does it add to any real appreciation of the story. It is as the inhabitants of some courtly and romantic dream-world that Gloriana, Una, and the Red Cross Knight pursue their adventures.

Neither as allegory then, nor as a tale of fabulous deeds after the mediaeval fashion does the *Faerie Queen* stand for judgement at the bar of literature, but as a poem; and Spenser, whose *Shepheardes Calendar* had already been hailed with delight in 1579, was freely acknowledged on all sides at this new publication as the greatest poet of his age, the first great English poet indeed since Chaucer.

His life, cut short by the effects of a rebellion in Ireland during which his house was burned, and he and his family driven from the country, practically coincided with the great Queen's reign; and since he was wholly of his day in manner of thought and spirit, it is fitting he should stand as a symbol of Elizabethan genius.

In his poetry we recognize a peak of that civilization towards which the Tudor instinct for progress had been slowly moving, a civilization part gross with material ambitions and the

enjoyment of all that appealed to the senses, yet transfigured by the glow of that spirit of adventure the mediaeval world had so much feared. The unknown realms of fantasy were to Spenser, the poet, what the golden Pacific was to Drake and his fellow-explorers, or the field of science to Francis Bacon, the philosopher, when he calmly assumed "all knowledge" as his province.

His audacity shocks or amuses us to-day; but the Elizabethan was above all things audacious. In the vigour of his national manhood he was prepared to attack and conquer not merely the dominions of Philip II, but the whole realm of nature if need be, and it is for this unquenchable enthusiasm, this readiness to put a hand to the plough and never look back until the field was furrowed, that the Elizabethan age dominates surrounding centuries.

And Elizabeth, who has given it her name as she dedicated to it her life, was truly of this great fellowship of the bold and unfettered of spirit. To acknowledge this does not mean we must cease to laugh at the extravagant compliments paid her by her courtiers; for if they were addressed merely to the shrunken old woman with blackened teeth and a palpably false red wig, they were as ridiculous as Bess of Hardwick made them appear when she mimicked her

royal mistress and her favourites to amuse her prisoner, Mary Stuart. Probably most of the courtiers who bowed and sighed and languished to order in the royal presence were acutely conscious of the silly aspect of their devotion: but then Raleigh and Drake, fighting " Gloriana's " battles on the High Seas, or Spenser, singing his *Laye of Fayre Eliza*, were not.

" I saw Phoebus thrust out his golden hedde
Upon her to gaze:
But when he saw how broade her beames did spredde
It did him amaze.
He blusht to see another sunne belowe,
Ne durst again his fyrie face out showe:
Let him if he dare
His brightnesse compare
With hers to have the overthrowe."

Such eulogy is merely a courtly rendering of the popular ballad of 1588:

" No realm hath her like,
Elizabeth Lord save! . . .
God for her cause doth clothe the ground with store
Of plenty and increase.
Our barns are full, our barques can bear no more,
And blessed we are with peace.
Elizabeth most brave,

For thee doth England feel all this;
We nothing want that needful is;
This jewel England cannot miss;
Elizabeth Lord save!
That England may be happy still
Confound all those who would her ill,
So laud Thy name the perfect will."

Elizabeth and England! To her subjects, whether courtiers, soldiers, poets, actors, or just men and women of the "common folk," the words were almost identical, their glory one: and the strongest and most popular dynasty that ever ruled this country reached the culmination of its strength and popularity under the last of its direct line, "Good Queen Bess."

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